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2020 Spanish Wells Drive · Landfall

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1827 Verrazzano Drive · Landfall

Located on the picturesque par 5 #12 of the Pete Dye Course, this all brick home built by Dan Kent offers Old World elegance and country French architecture with an open floor plan. **$985,000**

1312 Airlie Road

Always wanted to be on the water? How about a residential/office condominium with ICWW views from every room and 2 boat slips? **$995,000**

2324 Ocean Point · Landfall

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809 Swift Wind Place · Landfall

This gently sloping private pie-shaped lot overlooks the marsh of Howe Creek. Custom built by Old South, this 6,150 square foot residence features a huge covered front porch and large terrace in the back. **$1,450,000**

1 Oyster Catcher · Figure 8

"Twin Views" - Glorious sunrises and spectacular sunsets abound from this reverse floor plan with wrap around decks. Ocean and sound views from this 4 bedroom, 3 ½ bath home. **$1,595,000**

6013 Wellsley Place · Whitehall

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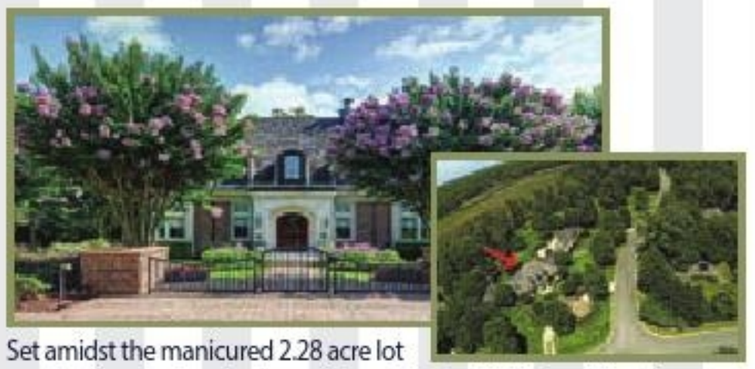

Set amidst the manicured 2.28 acre lot overlooking the headwaters of Howe Creek, this Michael Kersting designed masterpiece captures the serenity of life on a tidal marsh. Expansive views from this double lot bring the gardens into play no matter what the season. **$3,375,000**

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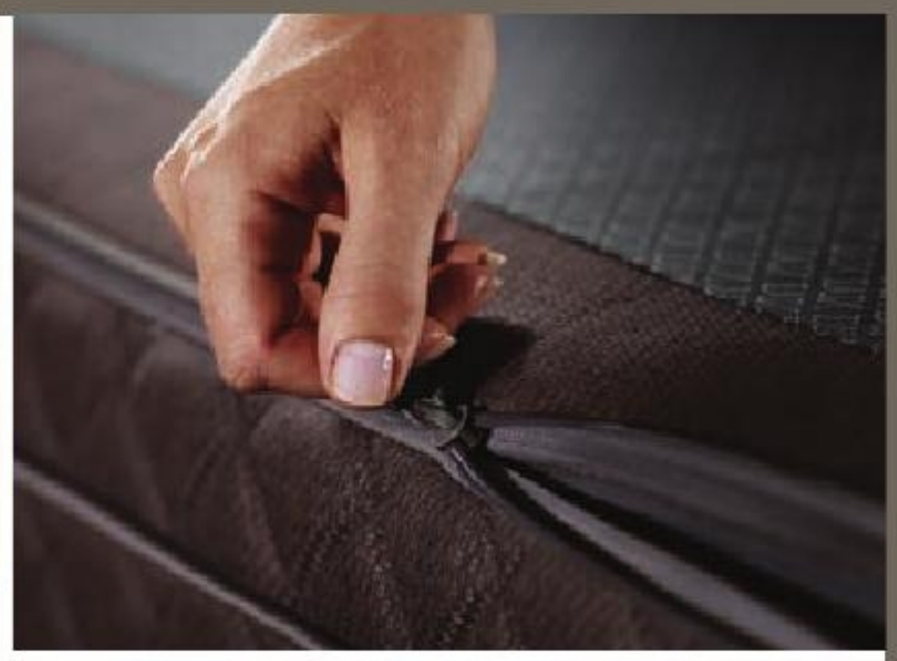

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Golf With the Girls

By Jim Dodson

The first woman I ever played golf with was my mom. I was thirteen, a newbie to the game, and, well, it didn't end happily. I accidentally threw her out of a golf cart and broke her arm.

The next woman I teed it up with was my fiancée at Bald Head Island in the summer of 1984. We were young and in love. The course was a decade-old George Cobb design that felt as wild as it played. My wife-to-be, alas, found the flora and gators far more interesting than chasing Old Man Par through the heat and gnats and bailed out for a bike ride to see Old Baldy after just nine holes.

So, you see, my track record playing golf with the gals is, shall we say, not entirely inspiring — or for that matter pain-free.

Last December, however, on a day that was colder than a witch's pitching wedge, I managed to hook up with a pack of seven hearty women, you'll please pardon the expression, at the redoubtable Wilmington Municipal Golf Course, one of the great civic golf courses of America, for a day of golf with the Cape Fear/Wilmington area Executive Women's Golf Association, a rapidly growing chapter of the thriving national organization that's brought tens of thousands of women into the game of golf since its inception in 1991. Since that time the EWGA has become, in fact, the largest women's golf organization in the country by offering a wide range of friendly organized events, learning programs, and social and business networking opportunities. Today, the EWGA has chapters in every state and several foreign countries.

Last December's outing was a part of a regular group that meets at least once a week at Cape Fear area clubs.

Fortunately I've lost the card from that frigid afternoon — my game was in deep hibernation that day — though what wasn't lost on me was the unmistakable bonhomie and passion these gals share for the game of golf and each other. Afterward, several of us sat around enjoying adult refreshment while David Donovan explained the pending closure of the municipal course for a comprehensive million dollar renovation by architect John Fought, which will restore fairways and green complexes to something more akin to what Donald Ross originally had in mind, doubling the size of greens, rebuilding bunkers and adding vital irrigation. Delays in the final approvals from the city meant the project will commence this month and allow the course to reopen sometime in the early fall. For the beloved muni's loyal patrons who clock more than 55,000 rounds a year, including the ladies of Wilmington's chapter of the EWGA, this can only be viewed as a gift to the golfers of the Port City.

Which is exactly why, when the golf girls of the EWGA offered a mulligan by inviting me to participate in their annual "Swing into Spring" golf outing on Bald Head Island in March, I jumped at the chance to redeem my sorry play at the muni, find out more about this great organization, and get another look at Bald Head Island Golf Club, which recently underwent a major restoration by award-winning Sunset Beach-based architect Tim Cate and continues to earn strong reviews in the golf press. *Links* magazine, for instance, rated Bald Head's restoration second only to that of legendary Pinehurst No. 2.

I was eager to see for myself what I remembered from playing there thirty years ago. Also, and maybe more importantly, I needed another dose of golf with the girls of the EWGA.

This go-round I found myself playing with founding member Ellen Gregory, former all-state softball star Vickie Blankenship, and sharing a riding cart with Shannon Benedict, the organization's current president and a woman who became so addicted to the game after taking it up at age 52, she now drives all the way from White Lake to participate in EWGA's busy roster of events.

"For me," she said as we joggled along the opening fairway, "the allure was always to do something out of doors, especially after my children grew up and my husband, Chris, and I sold our insurance business. Chris was the serious golfer in the family but once he started teaching me, I'm the one who got hooked on it. Discovering the EWGA was perfect because it gave me instant friends and playing partners."

I asked if she still played with Chris. I've known some husbands and wives to be a volatile mix on the golf course, especially when the guy isn't smart enough to keep his yap shut and not try to coach a woman as she sets up to hit her ball. This is a lesson I learned with my second wife, I confessed to Shannon, the one who in fact fell hard for the game.

"Funny you should ask that. Chris has a small game preserve he manages and spends his time on now. I'm the one who lives to play golf. Then again, we have so much fun, why wouldn't I?"

Ellen Gregory, who served as a founding member and the organization's first president, explained the local club started in 2005 and has grown slowly to a current membership of about seventy-five members, many of whom regularly make designated golf days, clinics, special events and weekly socials like "Nine and Dine," an afternoon outing for golf and supper at a number of local clubs that host the group on a rotating basis. At least once and often twice a month during warm-weather months, members travel on Saturdays to play at clubs as far-flung as Myrtle Beach and Jacksonville.

"It's a great time for girl talk," Vickie Blankenship – a songwriter and music producer who resides in Myrtle Beach – informed me shortly before pounding a drive twenty yards past my pretty good one on the stunningly handsome sixth hole.

For her part, Ellen Gregory also was a late-comer to the game, taking it up at age 50 just before she and husband Gill retired to Wilmington in 2004. "EWGA was also a godsend to me. I moved here not knowing a soul — or any women who played golf. Not only have I made a lot of wonderful friends this way, I've gotten to play some outstanding golf courses." Gregory's late love affair with the game — coming on the heels of a successful career in statistics and marketing — recently prompted her to sign on as the executive director of the Carol S. Petrea Youth Golf Foundation, an umbrella organization that oversees four different First Tee chapters and the Carolina Leadership Academy in Shallotte.

"We basically have one or two travel days every month — Saturdays of competition where we're invited to play at really fine clubs from the Grand Strand as far north as Hampstead and White Lake," Shannon Benedict amplified, moments before she smartly struck a 6-iron approach shot onto the seventh green — prompting her playing partners to do something I'd never

heard in a golf foursome.

They applauded.

"Men will say 'nice shot' to a partner but that's about as far as it goes," I explained to the trio as we were sizing up putts.

"Some men don't know how to have fun. They take it too serious," said Vickie, the low handicapper in the group (a twelve), promptly knocking down a ten-footer for par. Naturally, we all applauded.

"We talk smack, too," Shannon provided with a coy smile. "We're just nicer about it."

For example, for every birdie, players each cough up a buck.

Another key difference playing golf with the girls, I quickly realized, was not only speed of play — in fact, studies have shown women generally play faster than men — but the fact that they dress up and color coordinate with their golf bags and outfits. A round of golf with the girls seemed far more festive. When I wasn't busy admiring Tim Cate's artful reworking of the old Bald Head layout — adding spectacular mounding and strategic bunkering that brought the angles of the routing back into play, expanded greens with additional water hazards — or keeping an eye out for one of the huge gators that are a common sight on the course, I couldn't help but feel like I was in the middle of a spring fashion shoot for women's golf attire. In fact, at one point Shannon gave me a coupon for 20 percent off ladies golfwear for my own golfing wife from a shop in Shallotte (and Pinehurst), where many of the EWGA regulars buy their golf duds.

"Most of all, we have a great time being together in nature," Ellen Gregory explained near the end of the day. "Some women are more competitive than others, but everyone has the same goal in mind — to compete and have fun. We laugh a lot — especially afterwards when the wine gets flowing."

Indeed, inside as the tournament scores were tallied and apres-round wine was poured, and every participant seemed to take home some kind of interesting token of the day's outing, I couldn't help but wonder why more golfing women in Wilmington and environs don't belong to the EWGA. Over the past ten years, about the only significant growth in participation by Americans is with working women, the EWGA's very demographic.

"It's possibly because they still don't know we're here," Ellen Gregory theorized. "But that's why we wanted you to play with the girls today. When you tell people how much fun you had, they'll want to come join us."

Clever lady, no? Indeed, it had been nearly everything a serious golfer could ask for — beautiful spring weather, spectacular golf course, and beautiful companions in nice golfing duds.

I was half tempted to try and sign up.

"Next time," Shannon Benedict said, "bring your wife."

Contact editor Jim Dodson at jim@saltmagazinenc.com.

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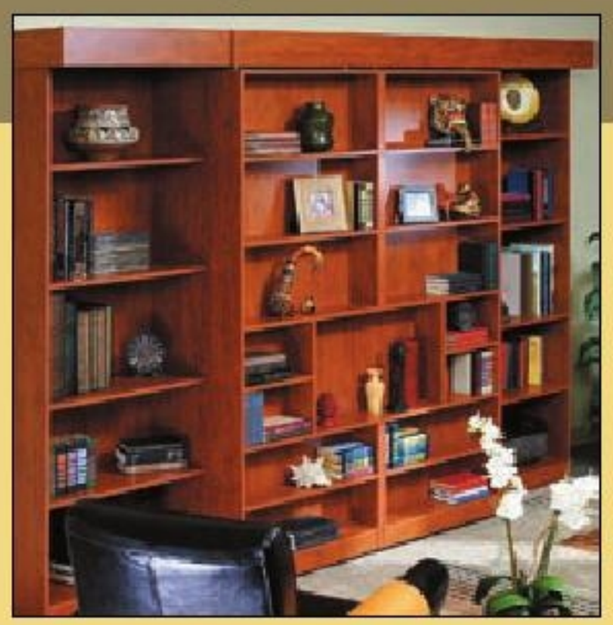

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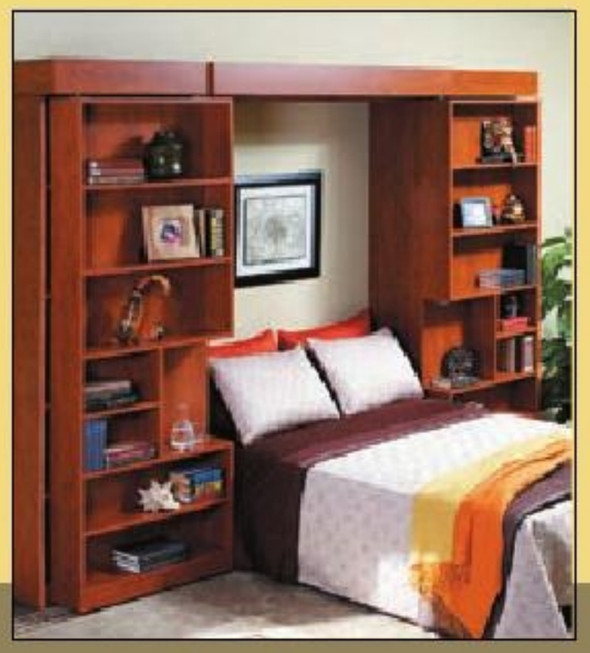

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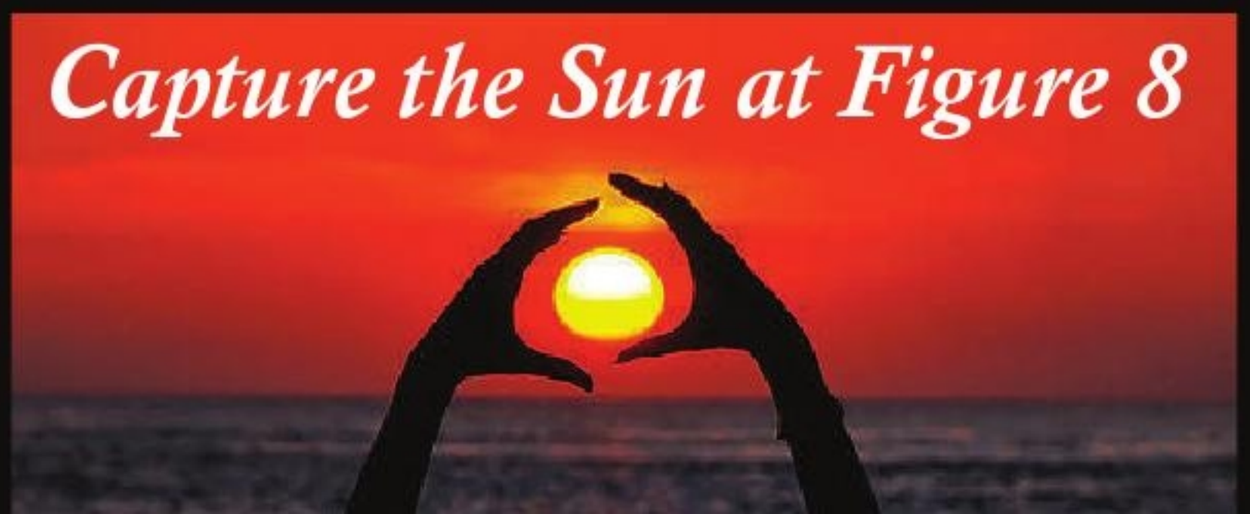

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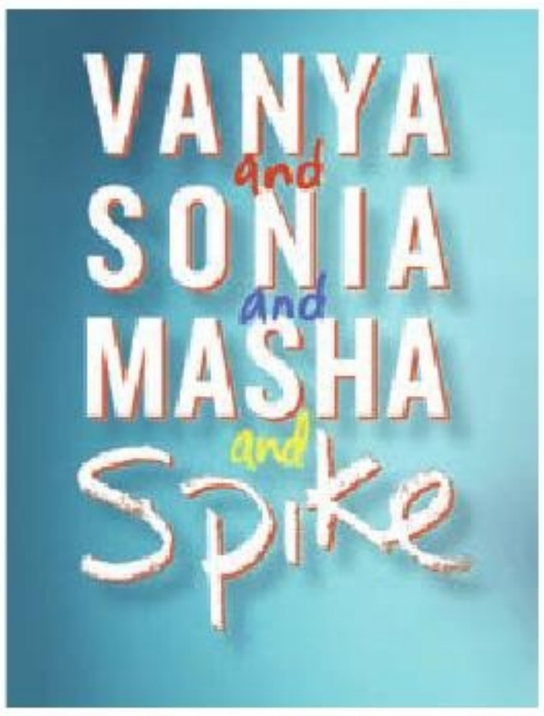
Join the Club

At the end of every Hobby Greenhouse Club meeting, members place surplus plants, cuttings, bulbs, seeds, roots — even old gardening catalogs — on the table at the back of the room for a plant swap with their green-thumbed cohorts. Friday, May 30, and Saturday, May 31, at the club's annual Summer Plant Sale, expect a variety: daylilies, fig trees, herbs, roses, "whatever's blooming," says vice president Teresa Anderson. Club members will plant themselves at 2318 Metts Avenue, Wilmington, from 9 a.m. until 6 p.m., with a colorful array of goods they grew — perhaps with a little help from their friends. Join them. Profits from the sale help fund scholarships for area community college horticulture students. Info: www.hobbygreenhouseclub.org.

Transformers

If you thought watching a 1977 Camaro metamorphose into a yellow autobot named Bumblebee was incredible, wait until you see how area designers "transform" interior and exterior spaces of 1909 Gillette Drive, a 5,000-square-foot Georgian designed by architect Charlie Boney. On May 2, the Arts Council of Wilmington and New Hanover County will open the stately doors of its first Designer Showhouse to raise funds for Arts Council initiatives. Prepare to be dazzled — and not just by the sweeping view of the Cape Fear Country Club golf course. Event chair Meg Caswell, season six winner of HGTV's *Design Star* and brand new mama, for instance, describes her style as "Palm Beach chic." With over twenty participating designers, each adding his or her signature flair, expect a look for every taste. Open through May 18. Tickets: $20–25. Info: (910) 343-0998 or www.artscouncilofwilmington.org.



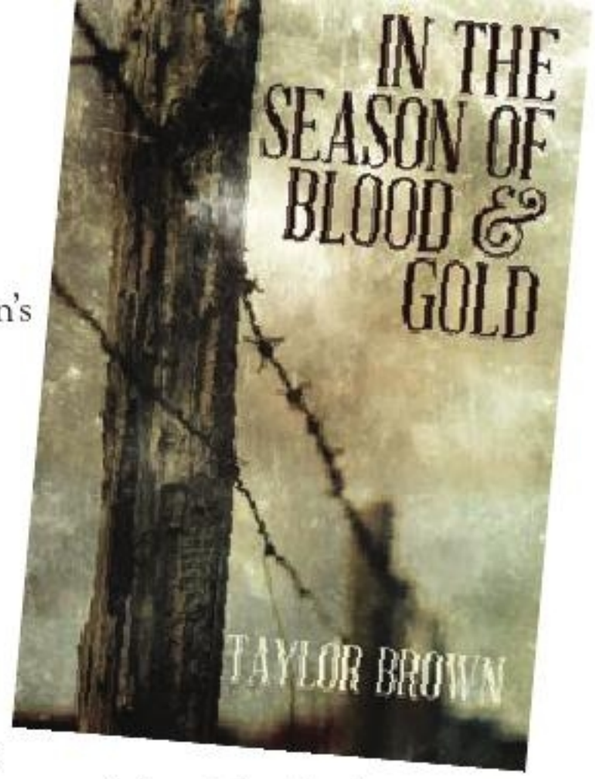
The Funnies Section

"My play is not a Chekhov parody," award-winning playwright Christopher Durang offered as cautionary warning. "I take Chekhov scenes and characters and put them into a blender." Don't know Chekhov? Don't worry. Just need a sense of humor to enjoy it. The Wilmington premier of *Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*, winner of the 2013 Tony and Drama Desk Awards for Best Play, happens Thursday, May 29, and runs through June 21. Nicole Farmer, director, was recovering from surgery when she first read the script. "I was afraid I'd burst my stitches," she says. "It is absolutely one of the funniest plays I have ever encountered." Performances are Thursdays through Saturdays, 7:30 p.m.; Sunday matinees at 3 p.m. Red Barn Studio, 1122 South Third Street, Wilmington. Tickets/Info: (910) 782-2262 or www.thalian.org.

All Hands On Deck

Seen the battleship lately? Notice how she has that nice glow? In early spring, Cape Fear Academy eighth-graders gave USS *North Carolina* a good scrub and some fresh paint so she could look her best for tourist season. Mission accomplished. See for yourself on Saturday, May 17, 1–4 p.m., when Lt. Col. Ken Rittenmeyer explains the various systems — armor, fuel, propulsion and electrical — that made the showboat an effective warship during a one-hour presentation followed by two hours of shipboard exploration for those who don't mind climbing narrow ladders or stepping over knee-high hatches ($40). Or visit Saturday, May 31, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m., for "Battleship Alive," when living history interpreters re-enact the daily duties and drills of the sailors on board the ship. Program included with admission ($6–12). Battleship NC, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5797 or www.battleshipnc.com.

Words With Friends



Fiction is a wild world, but despite what's happening inside Taylor Brown's head — we're talking about the bootleggers and the tattooed ladies and the poachers hunting for Christmas supper — this local writer is incredibly cool. Join him at Bourgie Nights on Thursday, May 15, 7 p.m., for the Wilmington launch of his debut short story collection, *In the Season of Blood and Gold*, which officially launches at the Press 53 headquarters in Winston- Salem on May 3. As Brown reads from his collection — twelve stories, many award-winners, many set on the Carolina coast — prepare for a bumpy ride with electric prose. It "grabs you by the shoulders and the heart" and won't let go, says editor Christine Norris of the book. And if, while at the bar, you're inspired to buy Brown a beverage, he's partial to Buffalo Trace's White Dog Mash #1, although it's not a reflection of his literary tastes. "I read a lot of what you might call 'grit lit' and 'country noir' from writers like William Gay, Ron Rash, Daniel Woodrell . . . Southern greats who portray a world populated more with PBR than mint juleps." He won't turn down an ice-cold Miller High Life, though. Bourgie Nights, 123 Princess Street, Wilmington. Info: www.Press53.com; www.taylorbrownfiction.com.

What's in a (Band) Name?

In terms of genre, Maria in the Shower doesn't reveal much. But however you peg the music (Vaudeville? Fringe folk? Gypsy swing?), you won't want to miss Vancouver's legendary entertainers doing what they do best on Saturday, May 3, 8:30 p.m. Founded in 2005, Maria's cult status in the Vancouver underground gave way to ovations from the mainstream upon the release of their first full band recording in 2011. They're cut from old cloth, and new listeners are hooked. Concert benefits Thalian Hall Center for the Performing Arts. Admission: $35. Legacy Dinner Tickets: $150 (include three-course meal, drinks and show admission). Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Tickets/Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

Wonderland

Oakdale Cemetery is alive with stories. On Saturday, May 17, 10 a.m.– 12 p.m., mosey through North Carolina's oldest rural cemetery with local historian Robin Triplett and you might hear how young "Nance" Martin wound up buried in a cask filled with rum, or why a riverboat captain named William Ellerbrock shares a marker with his dog, Boss. While you're there, notice how nature and history harmoniously intertwine. Iron fences are embraced by the trunks of ancient trees. Stone markers shaped like tree trunks blend in with the surrounding landscape. Butterflies brush past the cheeks of ancient statuary. And as you journey through time, gaining intimate glimpses into the lives of the deceased, be sure to stop and smell the flowering dogwood and azalea. Summer walking tours are held on the third Saturday of each month. Admission: $10 (non-members). Oakdale Cemetery, 520 North Fifteenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-5682 or www.oakdalecemetery.org.

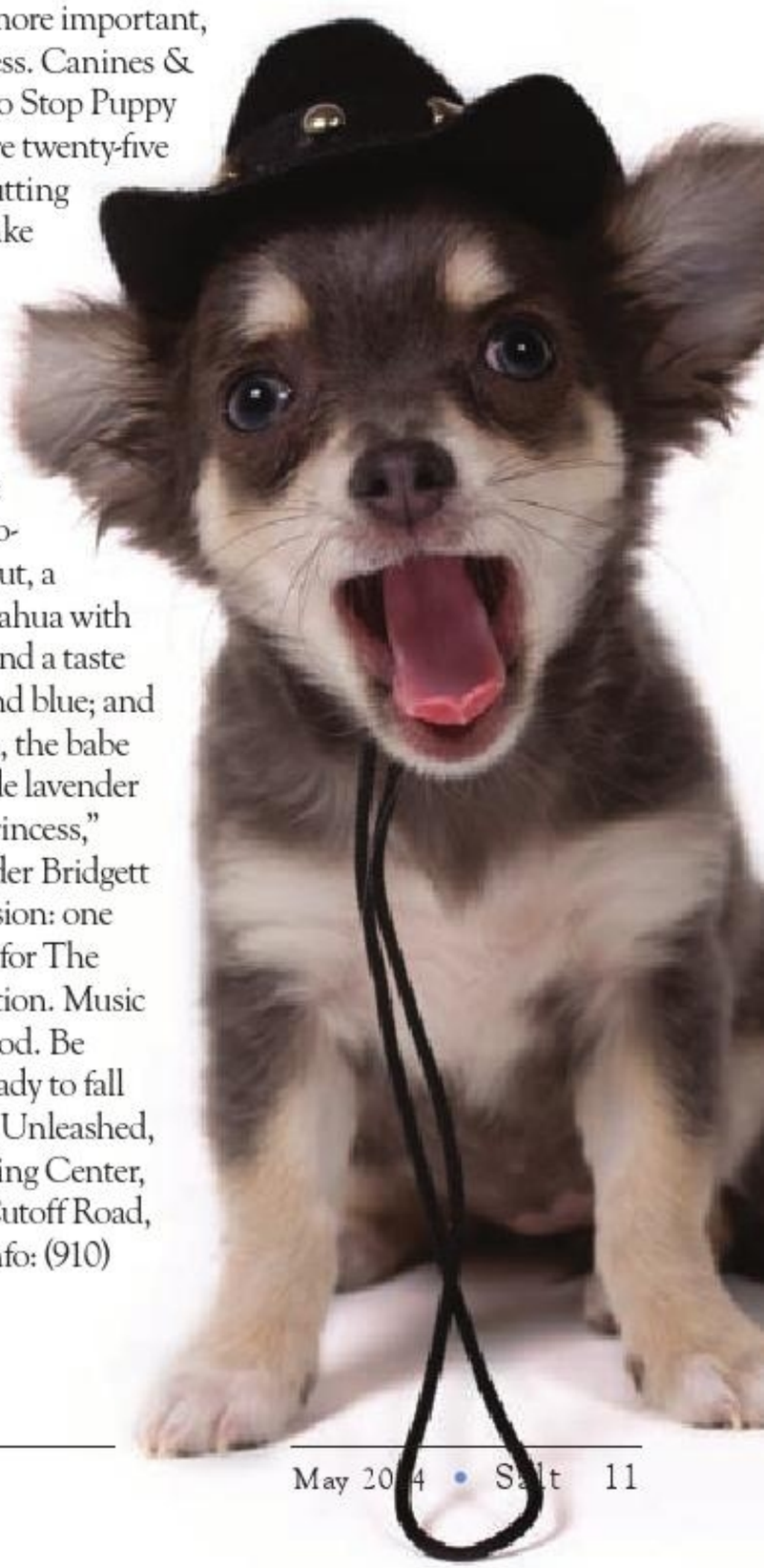
PHOTOGRAPH BY MELVA CALDER

Battle of the Bands

Surfing and music? Awesome. Add philanthropy? We're stoked. May 17–18, and again May 24–25, twelve bands will "rock out" at the first annual Rock for Autism Battle of the Bands to benefit Indo Jax Surf Charities' Autism Surf Camp and Surfers Healing Wrightsville Beach. Entertainment includes volleyball, dodge ball, corn hole tournaments, and a few surprises. Bring the family, dudes. Tickets: $5–25. Courts and Sports, 3525 Lancelot Lane, Wilmington. Info: www.forever-original.com.

Best in Show

Chanel's plumed hats turned heads. Valentino painted the industry red. But sometimes high fashion does more. Like Lady Gaga's meat dress. On Thursday, May 8, from 6–8 p.m., don't miss a runway show designed to raise the bar for adorable, and, more important, to raise awareness. Canines & Couture Strut to Stop Puppy Mills will feature twenty-five rescue pups strutting their stuff to make a statement. Showstoppers include Kava, the punk rocker pooch with the electric multicolored mohawk; Mr. Peanut, a wide-eye Chihuahua with a heart of gold and a taste for red, white and blue; and Scarlett O'Hara, the babe in the handmade lavender tutu. "She's a princess," says event founder Bridgett Rowley. Admission: one bag of dog food for The Karma Foundation. Music by DJ Brian Hood. Be there, and be ready to fall in (puppy) love. Unleashed, Landfall Shopping Center, 1319 Military Cutoff Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-9270.



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The Unclothed Truth

A former wild child from the original Whispering Pines decides to stay covered up – for now

ILLUSTRATION BY MERIDITH MARTENS

By Ashley Wahl

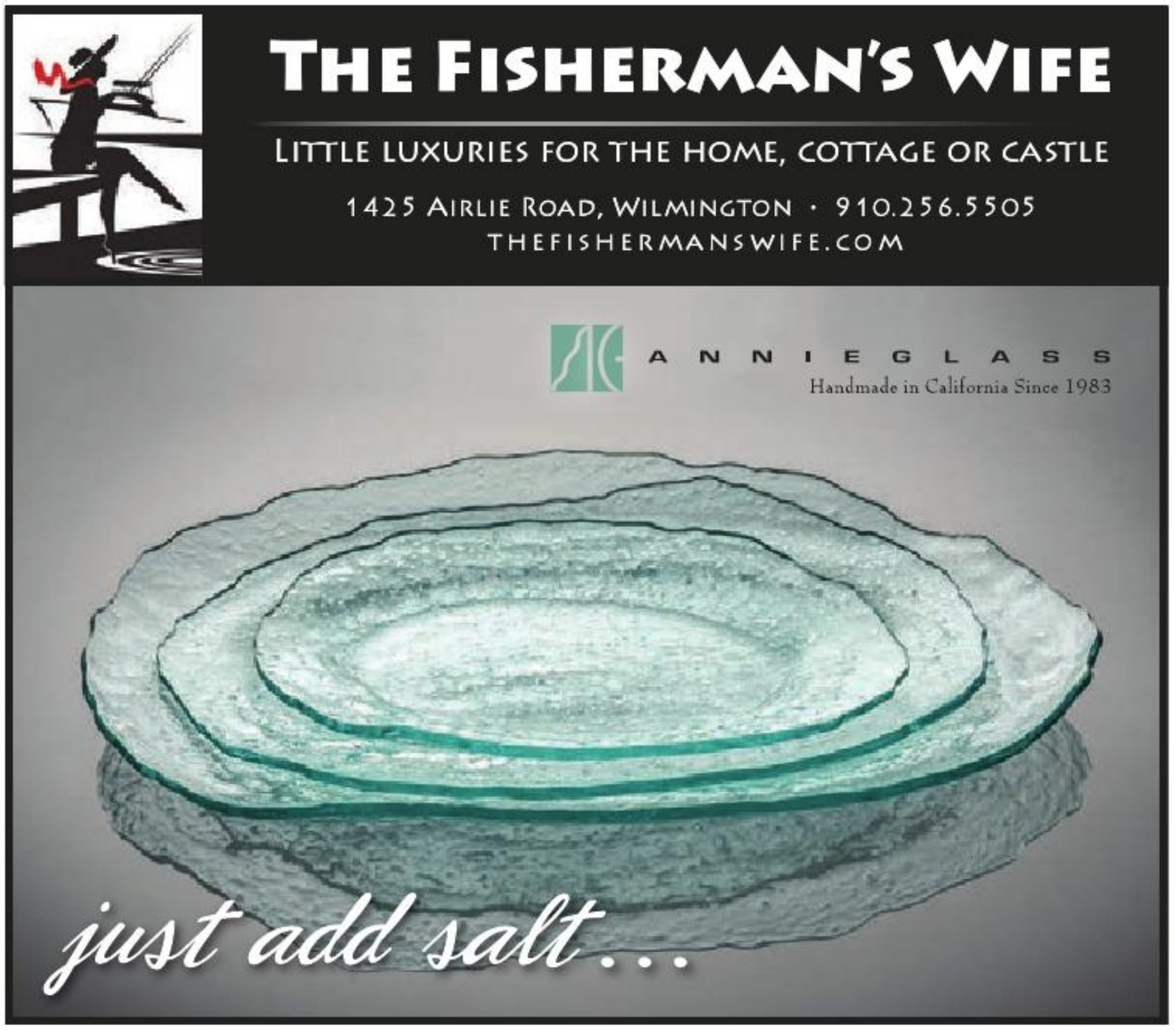
Among the schoolyard songs of my childhood was one so silly I could barely sing it without giggling. No way was there a place in France where the ladies wore no pants. And if men walked 'round with their "hammers" hanging down, then surely they must have been carpenters.

At the tender age of 8, the concept of nakedness for the sake of nakedness was foreign and faraway, especially when coming from Whispering Pines, the quiet, semi-retirement village in the North Carolina Sandhills where I grew up. Even after I traveled to Europe with my kid brother during our college years, developed an appreciation for Renaissance art and found a spiritual connection with nature, I was stunned when I heard that there was a nudist resort and campground just fifty miles south of my new home in Wilmington – and doubly stunned when I heard it was called Whispering Pines. It was like discovering a parallel universe right here on Earth.

Understand that the Whispering Pines of my youth was, by design, a place where Sunday drivers were the only kind. Most of our neighbors were elderly. Many were conservative. But it wasn't a bad place to be a kid – especially if you could shrug off the occasional disapproving glare.

They were sometimes well-earned. One summer, Katie, my childhood best friend, whose folks live on Pine Ridge Drive, talked me into stuffing water balloons into my bikini top and roller-blading around Spring Valley Lake, past the pine-fringed golf courses and the stately country club. The following summer, Katie and I pitched a tent on the pine straw in my parents' backyard, stretching an extension cord from the garage to watch *Charlie's Angels* on the portable TV/VCR. I won't say whether or not we ever skinny dipped in Thagard Lake. Suffice it to say that I was considered something of a wild child, but maybe that was because I was simply one of the few children in sight.

Surely, I thought, the *other* Whispering Pines must be a hotbed of debauchery. Reading about it, even the RV hookups sounded suggestive. I imagined a place of unrestrained passion where love is free and skinny dipping is child's play.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"How do you think I know about it?" asked one of my most bohemian writer friends. On the day of her visit, she told me, the men who live there were installing solar panels to heat the community hot tub.

"They wore sneakers and tool belts but nothing else," she said, providing a new and literal twist to the schoolyard ditty of my youth.

At a recent editorial meeting, several colleagues dared me to visit, howling at my unlikely connection to the unclothed Whispering Pines, and my obvious discomfort.

Innuendos came naturally. Comments were tongue-in-cheek. I was, whoops, the butt of the joke. Teenage dares were issued, worthy of the seventh grade.

"Maybe you could wear tiny fig leaves until you feel comfortable enough to bare all," someone suggested.

Another recalled the essay from openly gay humorist David Sedaris' biographical story collection, *Naked*, that describes his week at a nudist trailer park:

". . . her breasts hung like two knee socks, each stuffed with a single orange. I knew when I signed up that I would encounter exposed breasts, but this being my first pair, I reacted with alarm."

Too embarrassed to be caught looking at the online photos at the office, I went home to do a little poking around on the website. What I saw was surprising — and not so different from the place I grew up. It looked like a retirement community for, well, naked seniors.

According to the first-timers' guide to socialized nudity, accessible through the site, "The human body is terribly common. Believe it or not, everybody has one. And mostly, they look fairly alike . . ."

Touché.

As far as I can tell, there is nothing remotely sexual about the other Whispering Pines. It's a family-oriented resort where ogling is not permitted. And with its wooded nature trails and tall stands of sighing pines, it looks like a peaceful place to unplug from the everyday, and perhaps establish a more intimate relationship with nature.

I still haven't been. But if I ever change my mind, at Whispering Pines — you know which one I'm talking about — it's really no big deal. Meantime, if you happen to know alternative lyrics to the "Streets of Cairo" song, don't expect me to sing them without giggling.

Front Street may be home base, but senior editor Ashley Wahl is prone to wander.

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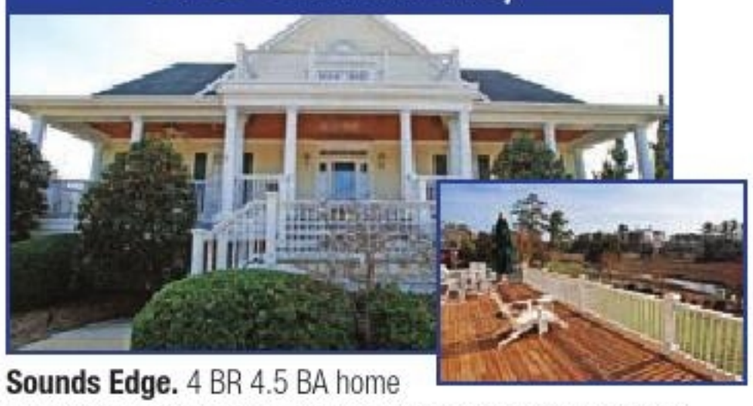

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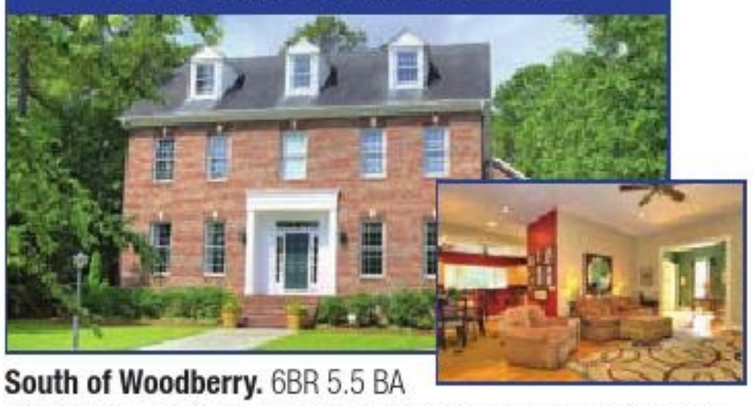

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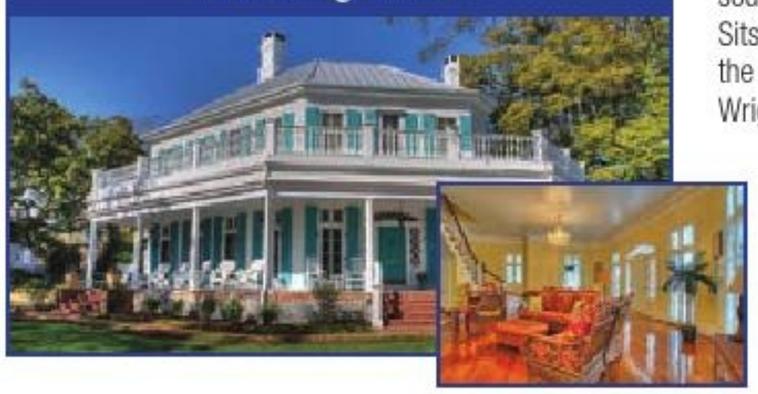

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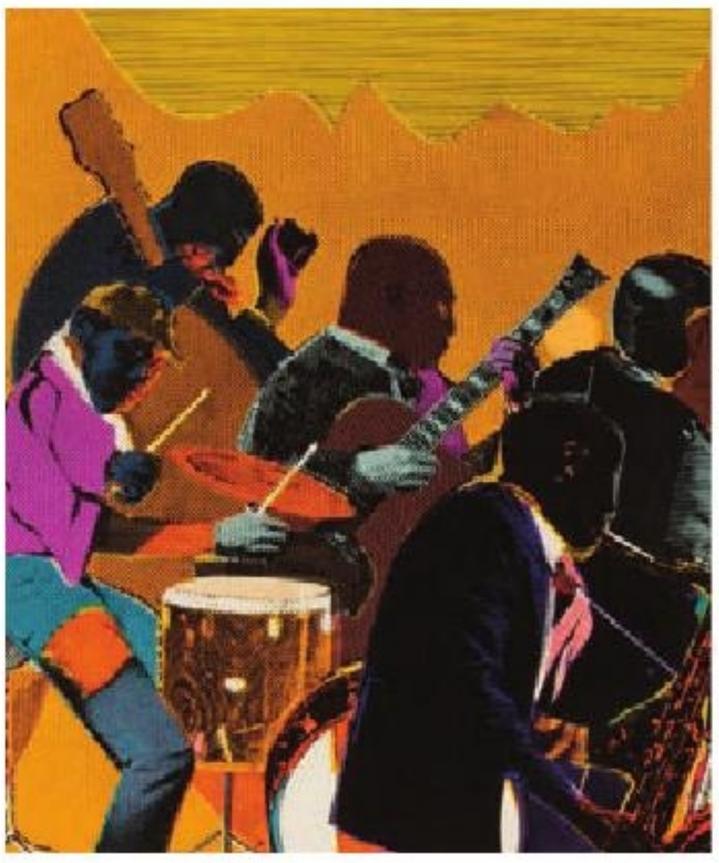

Romare Bearden, *Out Chorus, Art © Bearden Foundation/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY*

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Line, Touch, Trace
at the North Carolina Museum of Art

Hamet Hoover, *Sporting with an Overturned Cart*

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Bullfrogs and the Bard

Thanks to Shakespeare on the Green, thousands find summer evenings at the Greenfield Amphitheater pure entertainment

By Gwenyfar Rohler

It's a warm, humid night, and the picnic hamper is heavy in my hand as we settle into our seats for yet another year of Shakespeare on the Green.

"Here you go, sweetheart," I say, handing Jock a cold beer before unpacking yummy munchies from the hamper. Musicians play acoustic music onstage, we greet friends, and a soft breeze caresses our faces. It is any June evening from the last two decades that Wilmington has been lucky enough to have outdoor Shakespeare at Greenfield Lake Amphitheater.

Live Shakespeare in the park has brought the Bard to millions of people across the globe. From Joe Papp's phenomenal project in Central Park to North America's largest Shakespeare festival in Stratford, Ontario — the festival in the town that shares the name of Shakespeare's birthplace that started inside a canvas tent — young and old revel in the magical words that echo down the centuries and create worlds of wonder for us still.

In our little neck of the woods, Shakespeare on the Green began in 1993 as Cape Fear Shakespeare, the brainchild of Stan Norman. *As You Like It* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* ran alternating weekends at Greenfield Lake and the historic De Rosset house, and our population of roughly 120,000 in the county were instantly hooked. But one audience member, sitting on those creaky old benches scavenged from *The Lost Colony* outdoor drama, was watching her future play out before her. Her oldest son, Jason, was playing Lysander in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; on her lap, Cherri McKay held his younger brother, Caylan. Little did she realize that she would go from being performer's mom who helped with props, to stage manager, and in 2003, company producer.

McKay is the first to acknowledge that outdoor drama has its own specific set of struggles. "The biggest challenge we have is Mother Nature," she confirms. "Mother Nature is your boss. If she's gonna rain, she's gonna rain — what are you going to do?" McKay recounts that, on many occasions, though it might be raining in one part of the county, not a drop has fallen at the Amphitheater, but people stay home anyway because the evening news said "rain."

Don't forget the bullfrogs. "Yeah, they get pretty big and pretty loud by the end of June," McKay laughs.

Then, there are the struggles that Mother Nature has nothing to do with. Fortunately, 2009 saw the unveiling of a million dollar renovation to the Amphitheater. The creaking bleachers were replaced with nice, stadium-like seats, and a real Amphitheater shell was built complete with a backstage area that was unimaginable for the first decade of Shakespeare performances. McKay recalls the cinderblock public bathrooms that served as dressing rooms for years. Shakespeare on the Green was closely involved in the renovation process. "We could narrate our experiences and what we needed for grant writing," McKay recalls. Since they had used the space every summer for more than a decade, it was a continuous thread that developed and evolved, unlike, say, a touring musical act that came in for one night among hundreds on the road. But living through the renovation was another experience altogether. That year they performed *Pericles, Prince of Tyre* in front of the Amphitheater because the seating wasn't finished to make the space itself open for use.

"That was probably the hardest year," McKay remembers. "We had makeshift dressing rooms on the curb . . . the driveway . . . and the Rotary Garden was 'backstage.' Everything had to be packed up every night. We were out there till midnight — every night."

All of these are concerns of producers — things the audience rarely thinks about. McKay donned that mantle in 2003 when she and the late MC Erny realized that the founding team of Cape Fear Shakespeare had moved on from the project. January rolled around and it was time to start planning the next season.

"It was too important a thing to lose," McKay explains. So she and Erny re-formed as Shakespeare on the Green and, as the saying goes, "On with the show!" In two decades they have produced many of the Bard's works, including *Othello, The Merry Wives of Windsor, King Lear, Julius Caesar, The Tempest, Much Ado About Nothing, The Comedy of Errors,* and *Romeo and Juliet,* but perhaps it is the production of *The Merchant of Venice* that remains closest to McKay's heart? The late, great Donn Ansell played Shylock.

"That was the role for him," McKay grins. "He was the perfect Shylock — he *was* him!" For a final role for a life-long actor, it was a stunning and sympathetic performance that moved the audience nightly. It was also the final show for MC Erny, who played an old man with such conviction that no one would have suspected an elegant lady was under all that makeup.

"She was determined to do that," McKay remembers. Erny passed away during the run of the show, having performed Saturday night; Tamica Katzmann stepped into her role for the remainder of the show. "It blows me away to think about that year," McKay says, pausing. "Both of them, that show — it still blows me away."

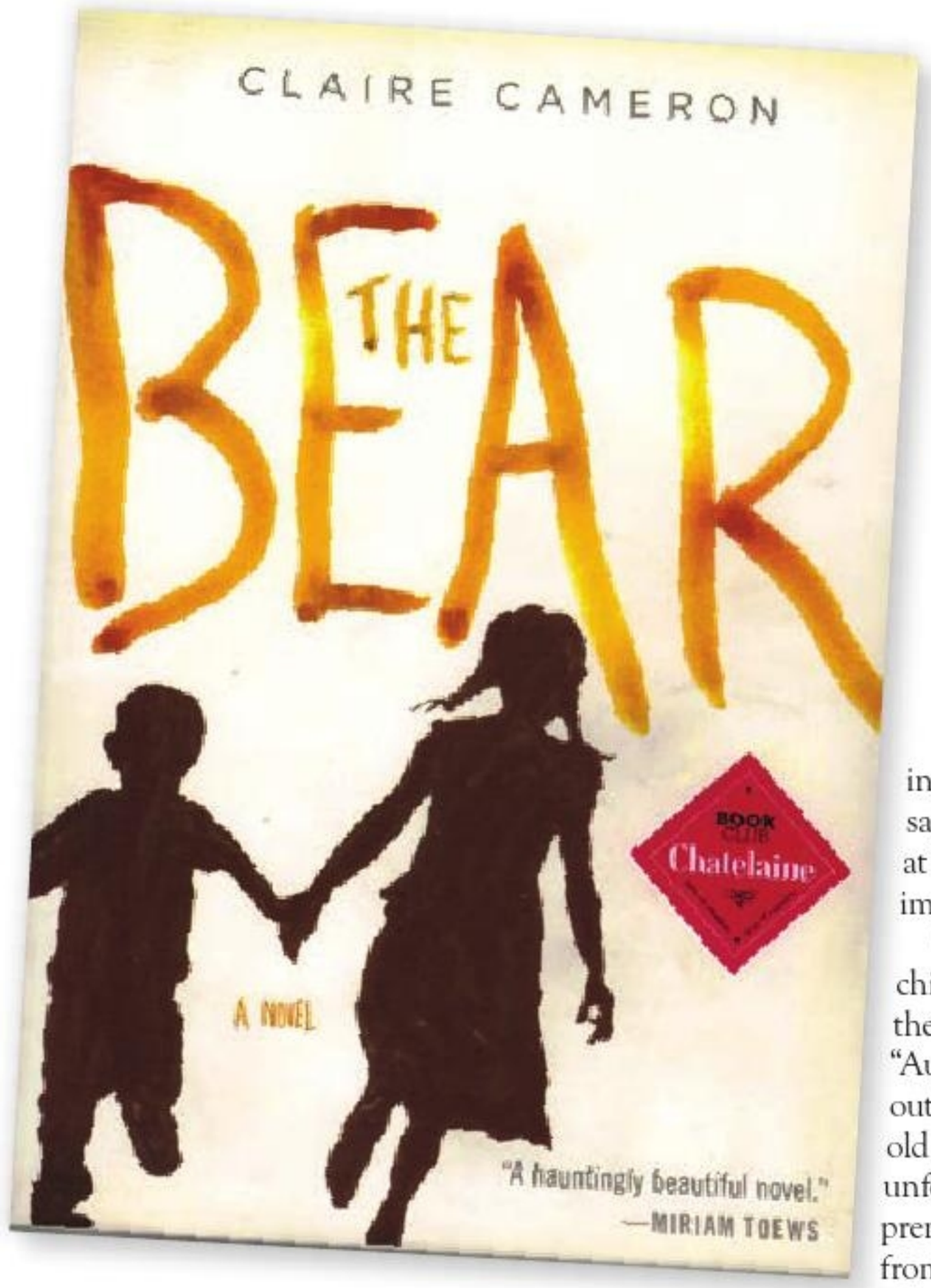
Not surprisingly, the comedies still draw the best crowds, so they get produced more often. This year's offering is a sure crowd pleaser: *The Comedy of Errors*, directed by Robb Mann. "There is no doubt it's a comedy," says McKay with a grin. "It starts and ends with comedy, and every aspect of it is comedy, comedy, comedy."

Cape Fear Shakespeare on the Green presents *Comedy of Errors*, June 6–29. Free admission. Greenfield Lake Amphitheater, 1941 Amphitheater Drive, Wilmington. Info: greenfieldlakeamphitheater.com/shakespeare.

Gwenyfar Rohler fell in love with theater at Thalian Hall on her sixth birthday. She spends her days managing her family's bookstore on Front Street.

Bear Trouble

A promising second novel comes up short on delivery. An Eden gone wrong



By Stephen E. Smith

Novelist Guy Owen gave his creative writing students a piece of good advice. "Bring on the bear," he'd say – meaning that a narrative has to make it from the very beginning, no false starts, no procrastination. No excuses.

In her second novel, *The Bear*, Claire Cameron comes close to honoring Owen's simple precept. She literally (I'm using the term correctly) introduces the story's action – a bear attack on a family of campers – in her first four chapters. But there's a hitch Owen didn't anticipate: the novel's first-person narrator, 5-year-old Anna, is stuffed in a Coleman cooler by her father at the outset of the attack. She only overhears a commotion, filtering events through a child's perceptions: "There is growling and a sound like Momma is making lunch and using the top of the Coleman to cut apples with a knife. But it is not Momma because her hair is yellow and she always gives me a piece of apple first. It is louder and more like there are ten Mommas cutting up apples but there is too many and they don't fit." Regrettably, the terror gets lost in the telling.

How do we know the narrator is describing a bear attack? Cameron reveals as much in an "Author's Note" that precedes the opening chapter, stating that her novel is based, in part, on a 1991 bear attack in a Canadian provincial park, where two adult campers were killed and partially eaten by a black bear. Although well intended, this information overwhelms our suspension of disbelief and involves us, in a critical sense, in the structuring of the novel. After all, we've been provided the source of the author's inspiration. Why shouldn't we have a say in how the story unfolds, especially at those moments when the author's imagination falters?

Cameron has included two fictional children in the narrative ("I added the kids," she writes at the end of the "Author's Note"), and the action grows out of Anna's struggle to save her 2-year-old brother, Alex, and herself in an unforgiving wilderness. It's an intriguing premise – two innocents propelled from their parents' loving care into an Eden gone horrifyingly wrong – and the plotting possibilities seem almost limitless. An able screenwriter would have a heyday with such a scenario, and thoughtful readers are likely to anticipate suspenseful plot twists and deep thematic intent, which, unfortunately, the novel never delivers.

The fundamental flaw is that Anna isn't fully realized as a character, and her grasp of language, as imagined by Cameron, isn't sufficiently developed to convey the full possibilities of the story. Child narrators abound in our literature – who's to fault Twain, Henry James, Faulkner, Harper Lee and Alice Walker – but Anna's narration, albeit crammed with excellent description and endearing observations, bogs down in pointless detail, redundancy, and wordiness. Granted, a 5-year-old probably wouldn't grasp the terrible implications of a bear attack, but a child narrator could bring to the story a fresh point of view, an opportunity for the author to exploit character development, and a necessary sense of realism, none of which occurs to any appreciable extent in *The Bear*. Here's a typical passage: "But in the fish land we can't breathe in water so there are bubbles all around and a fish put a bubble on my lips with its nose and

when that bubble is done another fish comes and brings a new bubble. I say thank you and I'm not sure if it's the same fish that brought the bubble before so it is a good idea to say thank you anyway when you aren't sure because it never hurts anyone. The fish says you are welcome and dips his fish nose at me and I think that the fish seem to want manners so saying thank you might get me more treats. Fish don't like bubble gum."

To further confuse readers, Anna's family history — in particular her parents' temporary separation — is offered in a series of recurrent memories. When Anna asked her mother about her father's absence, her mother "put her hand on her mouth and said, 'Oh sweetie.' I saw a little piece of sad drip from her heart up into her eyes but she didn't show me her cry and I didn't see it because she swallowed it back into her heart." We learn through back-story that Anna's grandmother is dead, that Barbie dolls are not allowed in the house, that Anna is jealous of a playmate, Jessica, who has a Barbie, that her brother loves cookies. The pacing of the narrative suffers from this constant drifting in and out of these unnecessary flashbacks.

Then there's the constant use of the scatological, intended no doubt to add a touch of verisimilitude to Anna's descriptions. Admittedly, children are often focused on bathroom habits, but Anna's obsession with bodily functions only serves to confuse and interrupt the unfolding of the plot. One or two mentions of "poo" would have sufficed. "I look and he is sitting with a naked bum," Anna observes, "and there is still the pile of poo beside him and yuck. It's like he thinks I am his momma and do poo and lunches now and I don't like it no thanks." Enough already.

What would have improved the telling of Anna's story? Cameron might have taken a lesson from Steinbeck's *Flight*, which has long been a part of the literary canon. Steinbeck's Pepe is older than Anna, but the third-person limited narration as seen through Pepe's consciousness opens up his story to diverse possibilities, not the least of which is Steinbeck's use of poetic language to reveal Pepe's emotions and to create a sense of literary and social naturalism.

It's a brave writer who tells a story from the point of view of a 5-year-old. Placing that child in an unforgiving and unfamiliar wilderness makes the task even more daunting. Alas, Cameron never quite pulls it off, and *The Bear* is an interesting but unrealized effort.

Stephen E. Smith's most recent book of poems is A Short Report on the Fire at Woolworths. *He can be reached at travisses@hotmail.com.*

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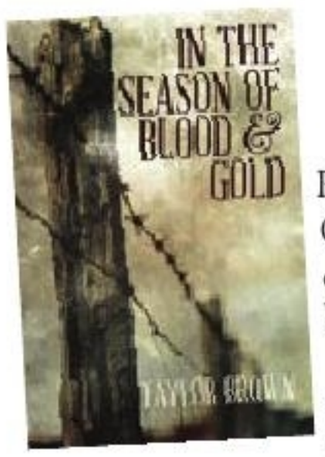
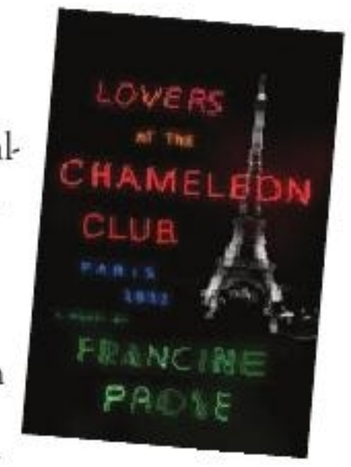
N.C. WRITER'S Notebook

By Sandra Redding

May is National Short Story Month.
Read a story to celebrate.
Even better, write one!

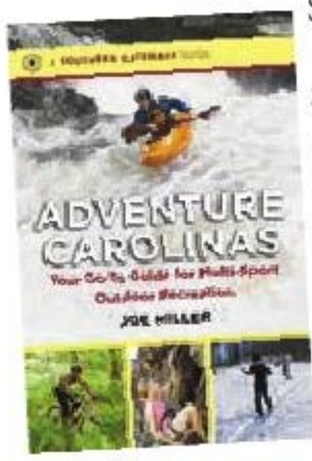


May 3 (Saturday, 5 p.m.) Scuppernong Books, Greensboro: Press 53 party and book launch for *In the Season of Blood and Gold*, a compelling short story collection by Taylor Brown of Wilmington. These twelve skillfully crafted stories teeter between tenderness and horror. www.press53.com.

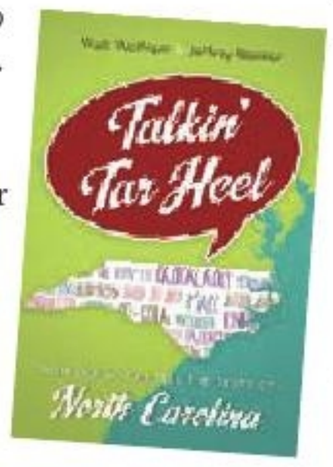


May 7 (Wednesday, 7 p.m.) The Regulator Bookshop, Durham: Francine Prose, lecturer and author of twenty-six books, including *Blue Angel*, a National Book Award finalist, will read from her new novel, *Lovers at the Chameleon Club: Paris 1932*. www.regulatorbookshop.com.

May 10 (all day Saturday) Netwest Writers Conference at the Jackson County Library in Sylva. Presenters include Judy Kurtz Goldman, Susan Snowden and Gary Carden. Former N.C. Poet Laureate Kathryn Stripling Byer will conduct workshops along with Nancy Simpson. Register at www.netwestwriters-west.org.



May 17 (Saturday, 11:30 a.m.) The Country Bookshop, Southern Pines. Joe Miller, popular N.C. author and outdoorsman, discusses *Adventure Carolinas: Your Go-To Guide for Multi-Sport Outdoor Recreation*. www.thecountrybookshop.biz.



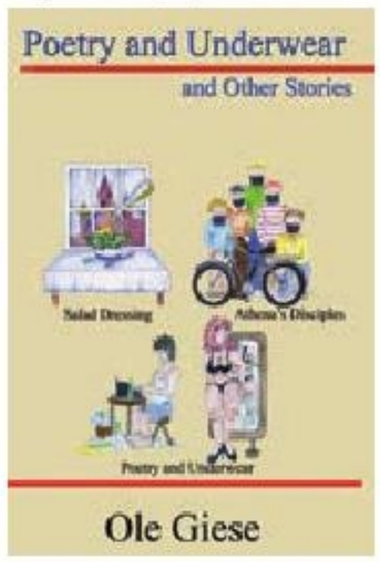
June 1 (Sunday, 2 p.m.). Barnes & Noble, Greensboro: Walt Wolfram and Jeffrey Reaser discuss *Talkin' Tar Heel: How Our Voices Tell the Story of North Carolina*, in which two Chapel Hill professors explore just about every dialect and language in the state. Take your buddyrow along for this side-splittin' presentation.

Short stories are designed to deliver their impact in as few pages as possible. A tremendous amount is left out, and a good story writer learns to include only the most essential information. — Orson Scott Card

Anthologies packed with short stories from multiple writers can be delightful. Most of the tales in *The Shoe Burnin': Stories of Southern Soul*, an anthology plus CD by twenty-one prose and song writers, will likely make you laugh more than cry. The inspiration sprouted from Joe Formichella's memory of a gathering of writers who stood shivering in the cold. When their host gave them a box of old shoes and boots to burn, both the fire and their imaginations lit up, confirming that "Any pair of shoes has a story to tell." The first story, *Boots*, by Ed Southern of Winston-Salem, probes the odd things that matter when faced with destruction. Jim Wilson, graduate of UNC-Chapel Hill, evokes pathos in a tale explaining why a father shoots a bird dog. In Shari Smith's lyrical *Flight*, words and wings capture the spirit of a woman searching for what she needs. www.riversedgemedia.com

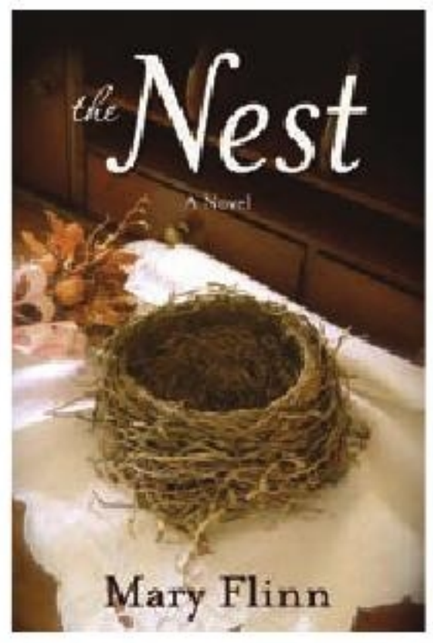
Know something, Sugar? Stories only happen to people who can tell them. — Allan Garganus

Donald Davis, popular N.C. storyteller and author, recalls, "In stories, I could safely dream any dream, hope any hope, go anywhere I pleased, fight any foe, win or lose, live or die." Besides entertaining at festivals, his published books include stories, a novel, a memoir and educational books on storytelling. May 18–24, he will be at the John C. Campbell Folk School in Brasstown (www.folkschool.org) and on June 6–8, he entertains and reveals storytelling secrets at the OcraFolk Storytelling and Music Festival in Ocracoke (www.ocrafolkfestival.org).



Book titles matter. Ole Giese of Greensboro reissued his book, *Long Stories*, with a racier title, *Poetry and Underwear and Other Stories*. "*Long Stories* wasn't a good title," he said. The new title, in fact, better describes the stories, which are engaging, humorous and often feature a twist worthy of O.Henry.

On Mothers' Day I have written a poem for you. In the interest of poetic economy and truth, I have succeeded in concentrating my deepest feelings and beliefs into two perfectly crafted lines: You're my mother. I would have no other.
— Forest Houtenschil



Don't forget your Mom on May 11. At your local bookstore, you'll find the perfect gift waiting on a shelf. Need recommendations? Any books listed in The Writer's Notebook would be swell, including *The Nest* by Mary Flinn of Summerfield. This clever novel describes how, despite woeful times, a strong mother gets her family back on track. www.TheOneNovel.com.

Bookstores and organizations, if you have a major event, let us know. Writers, if you have published a book in 2014, we want to hear about it.

Greensboro writer Sandra Redding's novel, Naomi Wise: A Cautionary Tale, *is a riveting story about heartbreak and hope in the 18th century Quaker community of Deep River. Email her at sanredd@earthlink.net.*

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Best Reader Memoirs 2014

Mama's Rose

By Karen Crouch

My mother never called herself a gardener. She simply liked to work in her flowers. Flowers included every green or blooming thing that was not a vegetable. She could bruise a tree trunk with a brick and root it in beach sand, but she did not know the Latin name of anything, nor did she care. She used the old pass-along names of familiar plants and made up suitable names for the others.

Mama was a good woman, like the virtuous woman in the Bible whose husband and children rise up and call her blessed. She fed the hungry, clothed the poor, and loved the loveless. But her generous spirit did not follow her into the garden. A patient and frugal gardener, she shared her bounty in slips and seedlings and expected the recipient to cherish the treasure. If the plants died from neglect, she was without forgiveness, and there would be no more divisions.

While some people dream of a villa on the Riviera, Mama dreamed of a garden with the rich loamy dirt of Castle Hayne. But she lived her whole life along the sandy Carolina and Georgia coasts where good garden soil is a hard-earned, home-made commodity. Still, she was a farmer's daughter. Even in beach sand she only needed "a start" of anything to establish a stand to envy. This was a woman who harvested a magnolia seed from a cone with the conviction that she would one day float its blossoms in a bowl. And she did. Over twenty-five years, from pinches, seeds and twigs, she established her last lovely garden in a sandy patch down on the waterway at Holden Beach where her own father had grown peanuts and beans.

As special as that patch of earth was, Mama's heart remained in her first garden, the one she started as a bride of 19 and tended for twenty-three years. As soon as they bought the land, even before the first foundation block was poured for the house, she began clearing and planting whatever shrub or clump or seedling she could gather. Among them was a pale pink rose which rambled along a stretch of white fence separating the back and front yards. Every year it bloomed on Mother's Day, and from it Mama made Mother's Day nosegays for my brother, Hal, and me to wear to church.

"Wear a red rose if your mother is living and a white if she is dead," she would tell us. "You two wear pink because I am half-dead from trying to raise you."

Over her years in that garden, Mama shared countless cuttings from the old rose bush. When she settled into her last home, an old friend brought her cuttings rooted from her original rose years before, and shortly the familiar pale pink rose was blooming at her new back door. Every year on Mother's Day we gathered the roses for my grandmother's grave. And every year, long after Hal and I had children of our own, Mama laughed about making us wear the pink roses.

About five years before she died, Mama passed an offspring of the rose on to me. Because she knew I did not inherit her patience with slips and cuttings, she rooted the rose herself and handed it over as a respectable bush. It has flourished in my garden, and, like her, I have shared it with friends. It is a sturdy shrub, a one-time bloomer with sharp thorns and fragrant blossoms. Fancy gardeners call it Dr. W. Van Fleet. For me it will always be Mama's rose.

No matter how early or late the season, it always produces roses on Mother's Day. I still take the roses to my grandmother's grave, and for the last nineteen years to Mama's grave as well. Often my own daughter, a mother herself now, joins me. The thirty-mile ride, a part of our Mother's Day ritual, gives us time to share and remember, time being the most precious gift a young working mother can offer. Like my mother's love, Mama's rose continues to nourish all our lives.

Karen Paden Crouch, a Wilmington native, is a lawyer, sculptor and gardener who really only ever wanted to write.

non-profit

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Friday, July 11th, 2014
12-1 pm at Hilton Wilmington Riverside

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The COR is a Wilmington-based empowerment organization focusing on prevention, advocacy, and restoration to assist victims of commercial sexual exploitation in recovering ownership of their lives.

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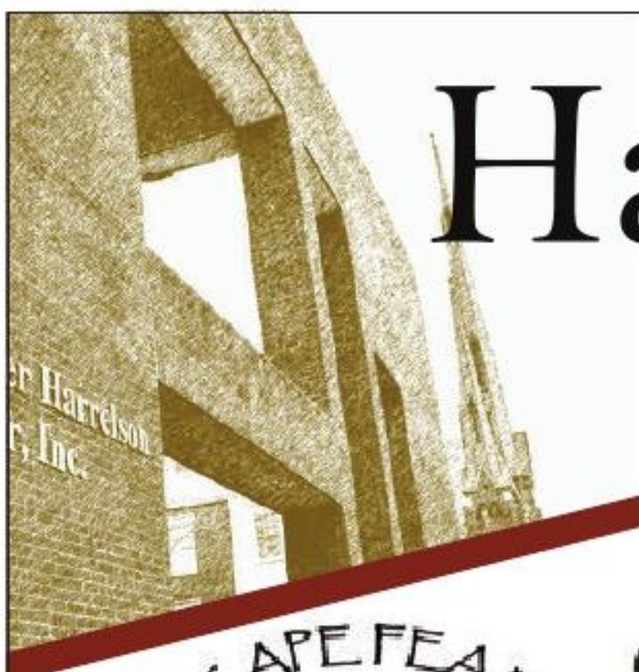

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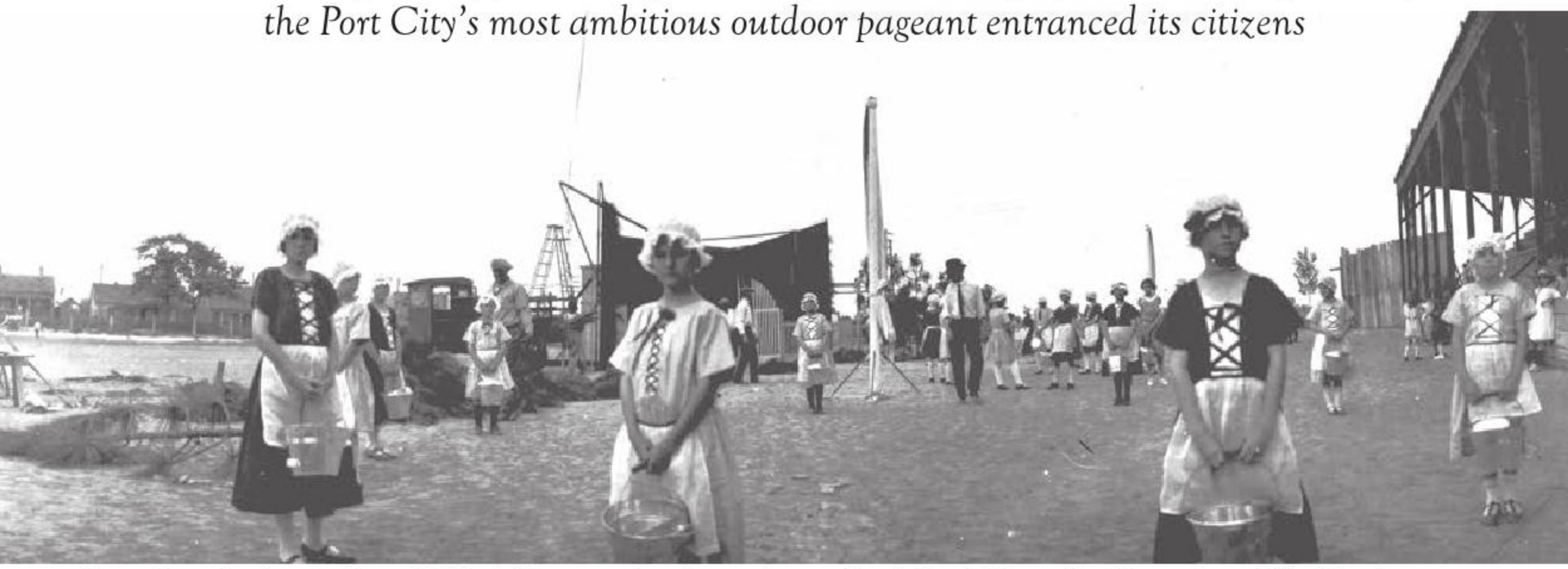
Wilmington Under the Stars

With a cast of 1,200, for two nights during the worst days of the Great Depression, the Port City's most ambitious outdoor pageant entranced its citizens



Young girls wait for rehearsal to begin while Herschel Harrington (center) reviews the scene. Photo by Louis T. Moore. (New Hanover County Public Library)

By Susan Taylor Block

Local history buffs are familiar with Wilmington's zany Feast of Pirates celebration of the late 1920s, but few have heard of the elaborate five-hour outdoor drama that took place on October 9 and 10, 1930. "A City Called Wilmington," with its cast of 1,200, was a nighttime pageant that unfolded at Bellamy Baseball Park, a popular recreation area that sat near the western end of Oleander Drive. Participants donned costumes that ranged from G-strings worn by Caucasian boys doing Native American dances, to a Victorian bustle dress worn by the actress who portrayed Mrs. Woodrow Wilson. The script followed the history of the town, as researched and drafted by Wilmington author, historian and photographer Louis T. Moore. Producers added the bells and whistles.

Moore was Wilmington Chamber of Commerce director at the time and the driving force behind the event that marked the 200th birthday of Cape Fear's settlement. Good at mixing things together for the sake of promotion, he scheduled a convention of the Atlantic Deeper Waterways Association and made sure the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter, Modoc, would be in its home berth on the appointed days. The conventioneers added a whiff of party atmosphere, and the celebrated Coast Guardsmen performed their popular drill exhibits for audiences both nights.

Overflow audiences were amazed with the scope and beauty of the production. Most costumes were made from fabric of deepest and richest colors such as bottle green, maroon, plum, heliotrope and a host of blues and blue-grays. Beneath the dazzling light, the draping movements of satin, velvet and lace textures mesmerized the audience. Like a stratospheric theater, the sky itself created a black dome above.

Stage sets included a reconstructed schoolroom interior from 1800; the facade of Governor Tryon's house in Old Brunswick; replicas of paddle wheels from a Civil War blockade runner; and a large model of the very first train to make its appearance in Wilmington. The Wilmington and Weldon train cars included a locomotive, coal car and coach. The coach was big enough to seat several descendants of the first passengers who arrived on the new rails. Producers even located a sedan chair upon which Royal Governor Gabriel Johnston arrived. Celebrating Wilmington's ties with England, the Port City's "Founding Fathers" bellowed out a rousing rendition of Britain's "Land of Hope and Glory," but with time compression, that political attitude would change as quickly as the costumes.

A young husband-wife team produced the play. Though the lines blurred on occasion, Edith Russell's duties generally were as playwright and coordinator of costumes, most of which were leased from a New York supplier. Her spouse, Herschel R. Harrington, arranged lighting, sets, and handled numerous other theater jobs. Their company, the Harrington-Russell Studio, was founded that same year in Asheville, and they would continue bringing "complete pageant service" to cities and festivals throughout the South and

COURTESY OF PAT KIDDER CRITTENDEN

other regions until 1973.

Fresh into the Great Depression, the pageant could not have materialized without the help of business mogul Hugh MacRae (1865–1951). As owner of Tidewater Power Company, he provided lighting for the many 25,000 watt lights around Bellamy Field. He ran his streetcar system perpetually to transport 2,500 people per night to the extravaganza and provided discounts to those who chose to visit Lumina pavilion and stay at Oceanic Hotel, two of his other holdings. It is assumed he underwrote much of the other costs of the event, for all proceeds from ticket sales were donated to "Associated Charities."

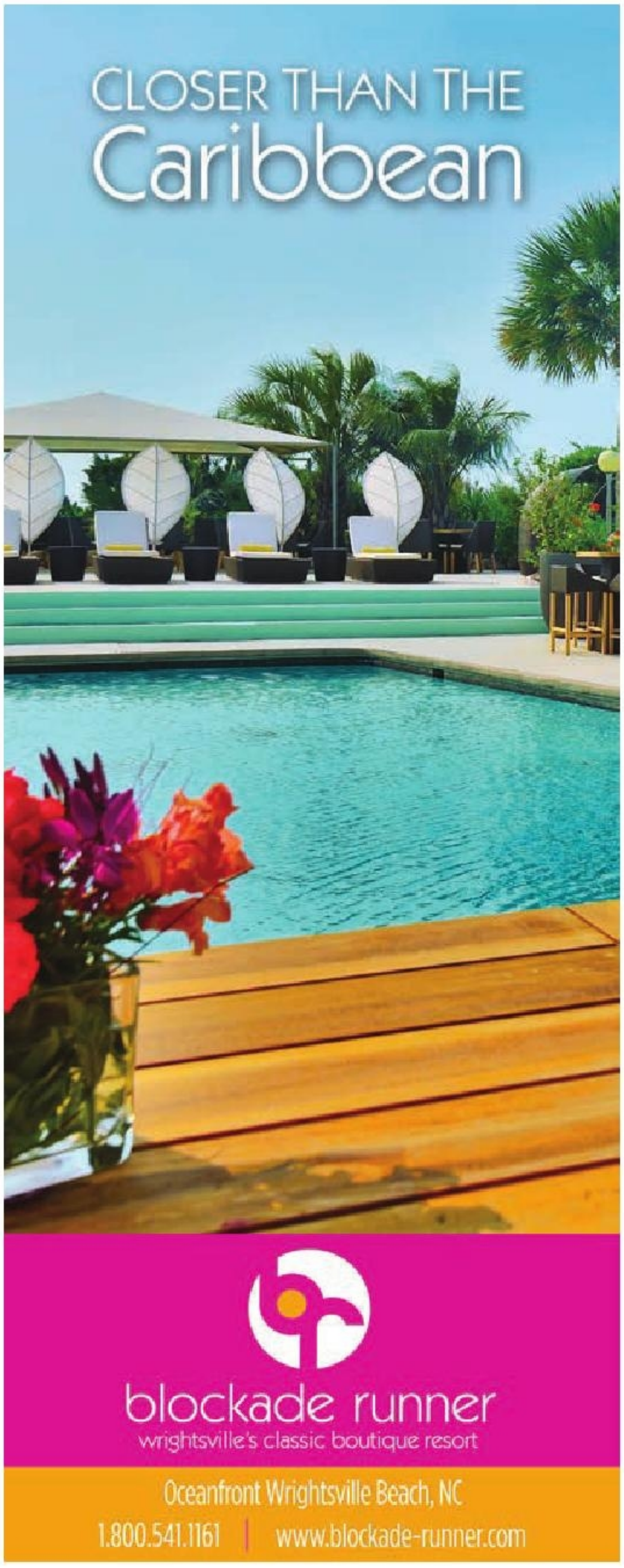
MacRae loaned the grounds of his riverside Tidewater Power Company plant to be used for rehearsals of Virginia reel dance scenes. Rehearsals for the railroad scenes took place outside City Hall, while Native American dances and dramatization of Cape Fear's Stamp Act resistance were practiced inside, at the Academy of Music (Thalian Hall). The balance of rehearsals were held at Bellamy Park, where, in daylight, Louis T. Moore captured a group of girls costumed as new arrivals from Holland who were just settling into the new 1905 farming colony at Castle Hayne sponsored by MacRae. The photo is rare, for flash photography was too primitive in Wilmington to capture the nighttime shots.

The eeriest scenes were recreations from Wilmington's early and brave stamp defiance resistance. In one, illuminated only by the flames of tar barrels, Patriots hung and burned an effigy of Lord Bute, whom they blamed for the unfair taxation. This riverfront scene was followed by another in which a funeral procession had just moved up Market Street to arrive at the graveyard of St. James Church. The only sound, for a time, was the mournful tone of a lone drummer drumming, and whispers of the pallbearers as the new effigy, "Liberty," was about to be interred. Suddenly, the pallbearers balked at lowering the coffin, sensing Liberty might still be alive. Indeed, that was the case, so they returned to the riverfront, slouched him into a big chair with arms, and drank toasts to the Patriots and oaths to the Tories. Members of Wilmington's National Guard portrayed Wilmington's grand non-fictitious Patriots of 1765, and the Tidewater Power Drum and Bugle Corps provided the music.

The script covered about forty years of city history per hour. By the time the pageant ended, participants, even young ones, were weary. Wilmington artist Claude Howell, age 15, played a wigged and powdered young man of the Colonial era. "Tonight, I stood in the park from 7:30 until nearly 1:00 o'clock," wrote Howell in his journal. "I am just about dead."

No matter how weary, audience members walked away with memories of a quick, colorful history, and myriad visual delights. Wilmington was the subject of at least two other pageants in the 20th century, one in 1921 and another later in the 1930s, but they were not as grand as this one. It served as balm, too. The Great Depression was preoccupying, but the Bicentennial Pageant had the content and energy to lift its audience away from thoughts like bread lines, fortunes lost, wishes denied, and repossessions for at least five engaging hours. It could not have been more timely.

Susan Taylor Block is a Wilmington native who enjoys researching and writing about her hometown.



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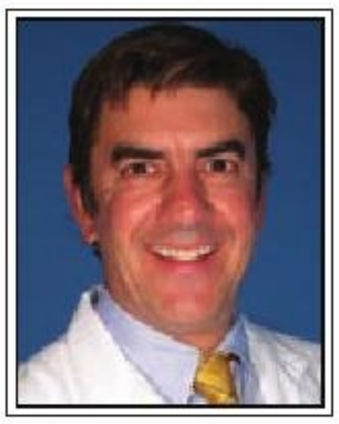

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Captain Timpy and the Mystery of the Striped Bass

All's well that ends deliciously well at the Bluewater Waterfront Grill

By Dana Sachs

This is a fish mystery and you won't know the full truth until you read the whole story.

The drama takes place at Wrightsville Beach's Bluewater Waterfront Grill, that porch-lined, azure-roofed edifice to ocean-themed cooking on the Intracoastal Waterway. The role of hardboiled detective is played by Dave Timpy, boat captain, charter tour operator, environmentalist, lover of the sea.

When Dave and I sat down for lunch at Bluewater, we heard that they were serving a fresh local striped bass. It was information that made something harden in Dave's eyes.

"You don't like striped bass?" I asked. I don't know a striped bass from an orange roughy.

He didn't answer. In fact, he remained silent until our server, probably sensing some tension, gave us the "few minutes to decide" and headed off across the room.

When we were alone again, I leaned forward. "What?"

Dave is a quiet man, steady and serious, the kind of person you want at the helm if you're on a boat facing rough seas. In fact, he has spent his life on the water, both recreationally and professionally. Before his recent retirement, he served for twenty-five years in coastal divisions of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, monitoring the development and protection of beaches in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and North Carolina. As a boat captain, he regularly pulls stranded surfers from the waters around Masonboro Island and, in 1994, he saved the lives of three young swimmers who had been carried by a riptide off Wrightsville Beach, an act for which he earned the U.S. Army's Commander's Award for Civilian Service.

"Is there a problem with the striped bass?" I asked Dave.

His nod was nearly imperceptible. Eventually, he said in a low voice, "I don't know if the season has opened. If it hasn't, it's not legal."

I said, "Oh, dear."

Dave picked up his cellphone. "They say they buy their fish from Greenville Loop Seafood. Those guys are friends of mine, so I'm going to call one of them and double check."

When the fish guy didn't answer, Dave left a message and we ordered a few non-controversial items off the menu while we waited for a call back. "You've got to be careful about seafood restaurants," Dave said, looking around the airy dining room with its expansive views of boats and water. "It's hard to have a place like this and not become a tourist trap. It's a lot easier for them to buy a truckload of imported seafood because most of their customers don't know the difference."

He told me that once, at a seafood place a few miles away, his wife ordered the "local grouper." When a fish that looked nothing like grouper arrived at their table, they sent it back. It was later reported by a local news station that Vietnamese catfish are frequently substituted for other fish species in restaurants.

Local? Imported? Legal? Not? Was it caught by net or hook and line? These are not idle questions for Dave, nor, he suggested, should they be idle questions for any of us who care about the ocean. In fact, these issues are central to the movement to promote sustainable fishing in North Carolina, a movement that aims to protect natural resources, respect the state's age-old fishing traditions, and encourage people to eat fish that's been caught close by.

"Right now, the large commercial fishing industry will catch fish, bring it to market, weigh it, put it on a truck, and ship it out," Dave said. "How does all this export benefit the local communities who own this resource?" Large-scale fishing, which tends to use gill nets instead of less-intrusive hook-and-line methods, not only disrupts the natural balance of fish populations, but it can also cause fatalities among species like sea turtles and dolphins.

Still, Dave believes that the key to addressing these problems lies in finding solutions that all the different constituencies — the commercial industry, recreational fishermen, environmentalists, government agencies and marine

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES STEFIUK

scientists — can get behind. "Right now, one side is fighting the other," he told me, explaining that it does no good to alienate the commercial industry from the movement to protect the ocean. "Commercial fishermen have been on the water their whole lives. They're part of the water and they want to be on the water. We don't want to lose their expertise. They probably know more about fish than the biologists." He hopes that an eventual ban of gill nets will someday benefit everyone, including fishermen and "the voiceless fish."

Dave's phone rang at about the time a plate of bacon-wrapped scallops arrived at our table, the morsels arranged like giant pearls on a bed of vibrantly colored salsas. While Dave talked in low tones to his seafood contact, I tried a scallop. As you probably know, scallops and bacon both have distinctive and unmistakable flavors. Combining the two risks creating a jumbled mush, but, in the Bluewater's version, quite the opposite occurs. The sharp saltiness of the pork combines with the mellow sweetness of the scallops to create a flavor that has a surprising depth and complexity.

"Well?" I said when Dave hung up. "What about the striped bass?"

He put his phone in his pocket, looked up at me, and I saw the answer in the smile of relief that crossed his face. "It's OK," he said. "The fish is not local, like, from right *here*. But it comes from Pamlico Sound, which is local enough for me."

"Should we try it?"

"Definitely. My friend says that Bluewater's chef knows his fish. He's probably one of those chefs who inspects it carefully before he buys it."

Mystery solved, Dave and I went on to eat a lot of fresh and delicious fish that day. A chunky Manhattan seafood chowder. Tacos filled with golden slabs of perfectly grilled fresh grouper (local, *not* imported). A dish called "Island Mahi," which was dressed in a technicolor confetti of chopped mango, pineapple, red pepper and kiwi ("It's hard to do mahi right," Dave told me. "This is perfect."). And, finally, we tried the striped bass itself, which was blackened and grilled quickly, giving the outside a lush and crispy crust, while the center remained moist and tender.

One problem did remain, though, and you've probably thought of it yourself. If you don't have a buddy to call at Greenville Loop Seafood, how can you know that you're getting good fish?

Over dessert of whipped-cream-topped molten chocolate pie, Captain Timpy suggested that you start by phrasing your questions right, and ask those questions not just in restaurants but also at fish markets, even ones sitting right on the water: "Don't ask, 'Is this fish *bought* local?' Ask, 'Is this fish *caught* local?' Because fish markets import, too."

Dave Timpy's Wavelength Charters offers fishing expeditions and cruises that combine explorations of the area's waterways and islands with information on environmental issues and the protection of natural habitats. For more information, contact Dave at wavelengthcharters.com or (910) 620-1784. Bluewater Waterfront Grill is open every day from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Information: (910) 256-8500 or bluewaterdining.com.

Dana Sachs' latest novel, The Secret of the Nightingale Palace, *is available at bookstores throughout Wilmington.*

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---

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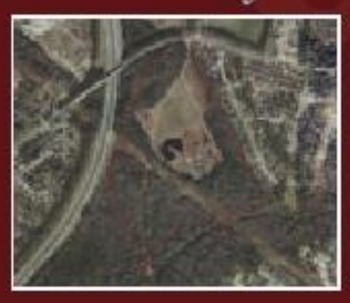
6100 Murrayville Road



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Mommy's Train

A tale of two rings

By Gwenyfar Rohler

This story begins with a small turquoise ring.

It is simple, a tiny round stone set in a decorative silver band that by now barely fits on my pinkie finger. It is the only physical memento from the biggest adventure of my mother's childhood. A story she loved to tell me that seemed as unreal and fantastic as unicorns and castles.

Many of my childhood stories begin with something found in my mother's jewelry box. Since my grandfather was a jeweler, my mother and her two sisters were left with a veritable treasure hoard by the time he died. A few years ago I hit that proverbial "rainiest of rainy days" and was forced to sell most of it to pay bills. But not this particular ring. With no precious stones or gold band, it wasn't valuable enough to be of interest to the pawnbroker.

In the early 1950s, after my grandfather, Mac, had his second stress-induced heart attack, his doctor informed him that he would have to make a radical change in his life if he wanted to see his little girls grow up. His stress level was understandably high: He was a jeweler in Chicago who married the youngest daughter in an Orthodox Jewish family involved with low-level organized crime. His new brothers-in-law, who had no love lost for the outsider who had lumbered in and gotten their sister disowned, routinely robbed him at gunpoint. Even ten years after their civil wedding, when a grudging détente had developed with the birth of his children, things were still not great. Mac and Genevieve (my grandmother) were looking at their teenage nieces and nephews, realizing that their daughters were going to grow up in this underworld-soaked environment and probably marry gangsters, or something less honorable.

So in 1954, my grandparents followed the "American story" of heading west in search of a better life. They chose Tucson, Arizona, because it had a university and a Reform Jewish temple. They left at the beginning of the summer to find a home, buy furniture and get housekeeping set up. They took the baby, my Aunt Betty, and left my mother, age 5, and her older sister, Aunt Carol Ann, 7, with the girls' favorite Aunt Dan and her hit-man husband. It was a fabulous summer spent with the childless couple who took them daily to the movie theater because it was air conditioned entertainment.

But those cinema-centric memories, which include seeing *The Wizard of Oz* on the big screen, paled in comparison to the adventure that awaited them. At the end of the summer, Aunt Dan put the girls onboard a week-long train trip by themselves to go to their new home in Arizona.

Hearing this story at the age of 5, when I was still not allowed to cross the street by myself, was equivalent to the kind of freedom one only had if, say, Pegasus were to drop by your window to take you to fairyland. I was sure it was a made-up story for my entertainment.

But there was the ring.

The girls were given a packet of spending money so they could buy food on the train. They explored every nook and cranny till they knew the train better than the conductor himself. But after that it was endless skylines of fields broken up by the occasional train station stop. They read the books they had brought along, drew pictures, played games, probably irritated the other passengers endlessly as only two unattended, bored, small children could. Then,

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK STEELMAN

my mother recalled, one day the train stopped in the middle of a field of corn. It just stopped. There was no train station in sight, nothing that she could see. Suddenly Indians carrying trays of jewelry, trinkets and carvings emerged from the field and came up to the open train windows to sell their wares. The girls were delighted, carefully inspecting every tray shown to them. Finally, my mother's eyes lit on a small, beautiful silver ring set with turquoise. When she tried it on, it fit perfectly, almost like it had been made for her.

But to a 5-year-old, $6 was a small fortune—especially in 1954.

She looked to her big sister, Carol Ann, who was in charge of the money.

Carol Ann had found something of equal value and cooly paid for both purchases. They returned to their seats with the first grown-up jewelry that they had bought themselves. How exciting to show Daddy that they could buy jewelry, too!

Sixty years later, in 2014, I am riding the same train from Chicago to Arizona, past fallow corn and wheat fields in constant wonder. Perhaps this field is where the ring came from? When I boarded the train, I cynically expected that the special cornfield is now paved over by a Walmart parking lot, but the farther I ride, the less it looks like anything has changed out here in a long time. Huge stretches of land are still prairie dotted with the occasional cow or horse. This most interesting and obviously modern development is the windmill farm that has sprung up like mushrooms across the windy plains. But for the most part, it is desolate farm country. The famous crop duster scene from *North by Northwest* could still be filmed here today.

I ask the conductor if many children travel alone on the train.

No, she shakes her head. Her own daughter is 16 and she sends her back and forth by plane. "I wouldn't want a teenager, my teenager, in the coach," she explains. "It's like a city on wheels. It stops at stations, people can get on and off . . . No, I wouldn't do that."

I tell her that part of why I am on this train, on this route, is that my mother and her sister rode it alone when they were 5 and 7, that I wanted to see what they saw, to re-create, to re-connect.

"Alone?" her eyes widen. "Was the porter in charge of them?"

"I assume so, but all I have are the memories of a 5-year-old."

She shakes her head, "They wouldn't allow that now."

At breakfast on my second day of what I am referring to as "Mommy's Train," I am seated with two people from Chicago. As we chat and they compare stories about corruption, crime and real estate in Chicagoland, the romantic stories about my distant relatives in organized crime start to lose their luster.

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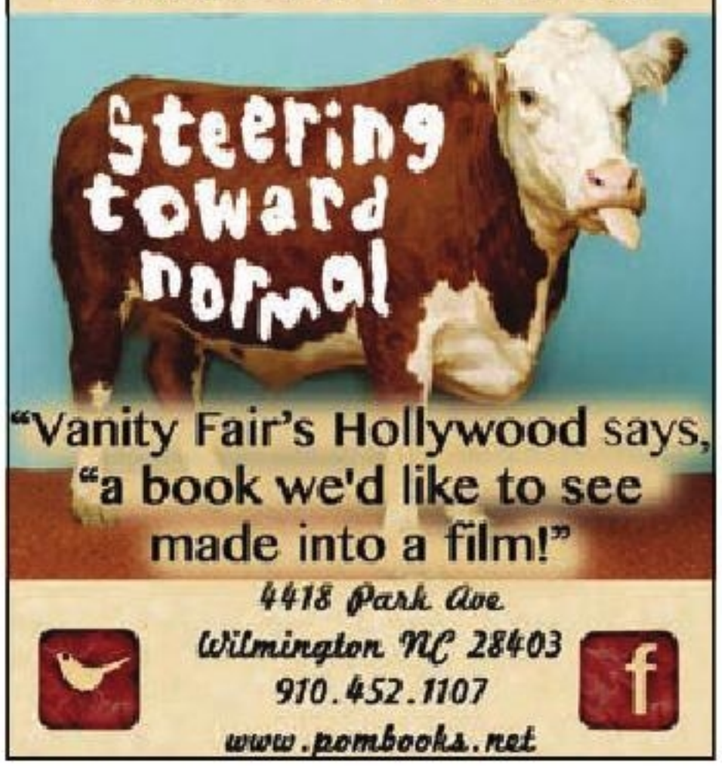

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HISTORIC DOWNTOWN WILMINGTON

they'll shoot no matter what," said the man. I pictured my grandfather and his brothers-in-law having yet another street corner confrontation, but this one ending differently.

"Do you read the real estate section of the paper?" the man asked the lady. She nodded. "Do you remember the crime boss's house for sale a few years back with the big picture window with one way glass?"

I have always known that several of my mother's uncles disappeared and were never heard from again. But somehow I started picturing them walking up a driveway like that, sent on an errand they would never come back from. The cousins that came out to Arizona to live with my grandparents because they were now fatherless swam before my eyes. I excused myself to go splash water on my face. Those stories had always been fun, distant and unreal to me. But they weren't really. It wasn't really fun, it wasn't a movie. People really lost their loved ones.

We approach Albuquerque close to 6 p.m. The conductor announces that we will be stopping for about twenty-five minutes to bring on new passengers and stock supplies. Also, there will be Native American vendors set up on the platform if you would like to visit them while enjoying a cigarette outside the train and away from doors or vents. My ears perk up. It's not quite a cornfield, but it is something.

On the platform a smiling, older Native American gentleman has jewelry, serapes and trinkets set out for purchase. I make a beeline for the silver jewelry. I can tell it's all from China. It's too uniform, too identical. The turquoise is paler than it should be with little character. This is not individual craftsmanship using the stones and the metal to create something memorable. But inexplicably, I feel compelled to get a companion for my mother's ring, to somehow close this circle. I pick out a plain turquoise on a silver band that slides over my ring finger easily.

"Do we have a price on this, pretty lady?" I ask the long-haired beauty behind the counter.

She grins at the compliment and turns to the man with the matching smile."Dad, this doesn't have a price?"

"It's thirty-five. It's silver." He points and nods. I'm not in a bargaining mood. It's not about getting a good deal, it's about this ring, from this place, and another ring and the story they will share. I dig the money out of my purse, and she wraps it up in a small brown paper bag. Back on the train I slide both rings onto my left hand and think about the changing landscape of our country that they illustrate. A time when two little girls could travel across county by themselves and buy a handmade ring for $6. By our standards, it really is a fairy tale, one that ends not with a pot of gold, but a small turquoise ring.

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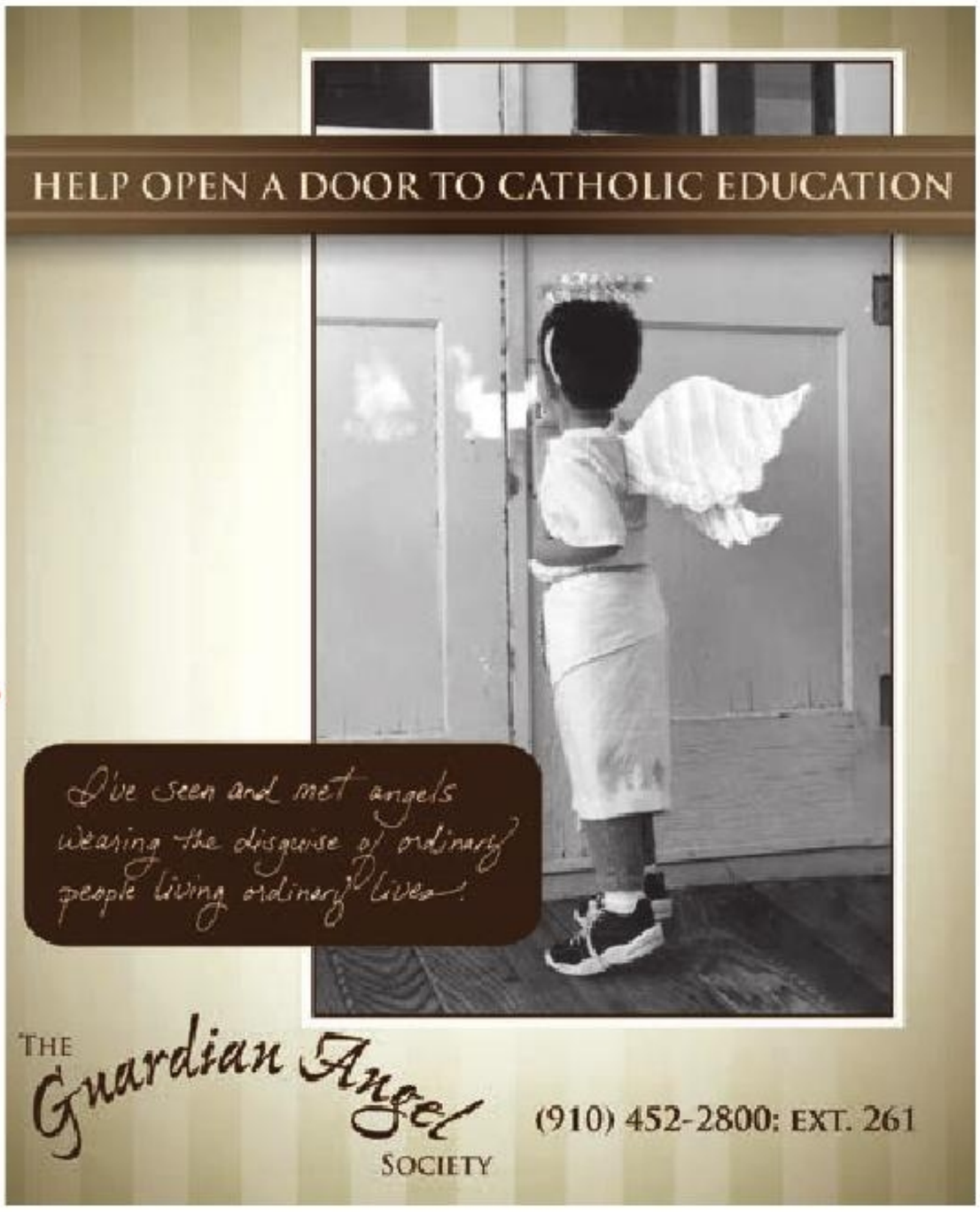
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The Great Waves

Where nothing exists but a ride on a perfect board

By Jason Frye

The beauty of the sea lies in its lines. The curve and sweep of wave, crest and trough; the graceful undulations of a line of pelicans skimming the surface; and the circadian ebb and flow of the tides as they trace their reach with a line of shells.

"The Great Wave off Kanagawa," Hokusai's famous Japanese woodblock print from the 1830s, captures a sea full of waves and fishing boats the moment before the most fearsome of the waves crests. The lines in the print are elegant, and layer upon layer of waves recede into the background until — there — its white peak just visible above the white-capped waves, Mt. Fuji, in the distance. For many, this is the sea frozen in time, the perfect encapsulation of the line of wave, crest and trough.

*

Ian Balding's shop is filled with lines and curves. He builds surfboards and stand-up paddle boards. Wherever you look, you'll see the sweep of a fin or the sensuous curve of a board's nose or the easy twin arcs of a fishtail.

Like Hokusai, Balding works in wood. And foam and resin and fiberglass.

Like Hokusai, his work brings waves to life.

*

Standing in the center of Balding's shop is a monolith of foam. A 4-foot by 20-foot tower that holds a dozen surfboards inside. His job seems simple: to cut away everything that isn't a surfboard, a tale as old as Michelangelo. But that's where the simplicity ends.

"Anyone with a little woodworking skill can cut out the basic shape of a surfboard," he says. "The trick is translating the shape of the board into a shape complimentary to the wave."

The water defines the board.

*

Waves are ever-present with Balding as he works. Their sounds fill his ears and his body remembers the lift and push that come after dropping in. Through his hands, he channels the waves, getting this curve just so, this line right. As he takes rasp and file and planer to a block of foam, a board emerges, the one he's seen in his mind, rising and following the course wave and rider agree upon.

*

Balding's surfboards and paddle boards, the foam ones, are function translated into form. His wooden pieces are art — form following function, but so closely, so well balanced, so intertwined, that it's hard to say which is first and which is the art.

The balsa wood boards he builds are heirlooms. You hate to ride them. You hate not to ride them. You want to keep them and show them off and strap them to the top of your car and hang them on your wall at home.

As he works the board — carving away thin strips with his knife, shaving curls of wood away with his plane — the shop disappears. The noise of the radio and the hum of machines fade until there is nothing except his hands and their memories of the shapes of waves.

*

The sea beats endlessly against Wrightsville Beach. The water here is crystal, turquoise, lapis, slate. The waves temperamental, growing tall with the storms, lying flat on the calmest days. Through it all, surfers and paddlers head out to tap into the energy — psychic and physical — locked in wind, water and wave. Their boards, their paddles, their bodies hum with anticipation as swells approach, and when they rise up on the face of a wave, as the fishing boats do in "The Great Wave," nothing else exists. Nothing matters except the ride. Nothing exists in that moment but the wave, the board, the rider.

Ian Balding Paddle & Surf is located at 2725 Old Wrightsboro Road, Unit 4D, Wilmington. Info: ianbalding.com

Jason Frye is a travel writer and author of Moon North Carolina and Moon NC Coast. *He's a barbecue judge, he rarely naps, and he's always on the road. Keep up with his travels at tarheeltourist.com.*

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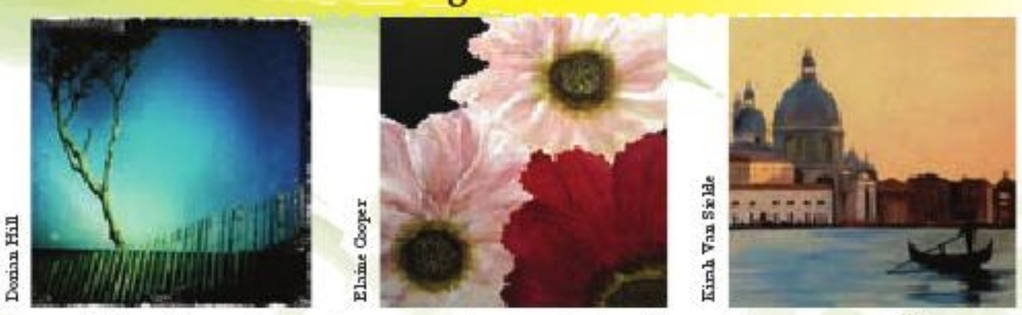

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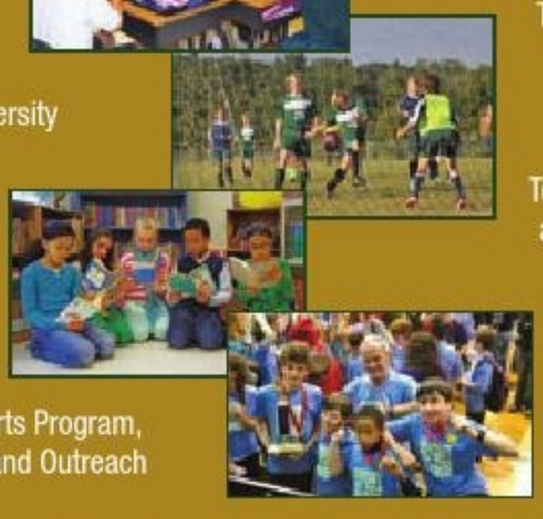

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The Quest

The gift of learning to see what is right in front of you

By Bill Thompson

Every once in a while one of those defining moments comes along and you don't realize its significance until it's gone.

Up until a few years ago I kept some horses in a pasture next to my house. One of those horses I have had since she was born. Mayflower (her official American Quarter Horse name is "Hills Sunflower 2528951") and I have been together almost thirty years now. She has been a constant through job changes, births, deaths, marriages, divorce, and all the other things that have happened to me in that period of time. She is now retired to a permanent pasture, and I am retired and still working.

When Mayflower was here at the house we would often go on rides through the woods that extend for some miles behind my house. It would usually be late afternoon when I got home from work. As I walked toward the barn, Mayflower would run up to me and whicker. (That's a sound horses make that's kind of a cross between a snort and sneeze.)

I would brush her down good and she would almost go to sleep. (I respond the same way to similar activity.) The smell of saddle leather mixed with the scent of hay and the vision of slanted sun rays slipping through the walls of the old barn created a calmness, a tranquility that comes from familiarity, a contentment that comes with the sound of silence.

Back then, Mayflower and I shared a friendship with a dog named Chip. Chip was a proud product of impeccable breeding, the result of loving lust between a registered Labrador retriever and a dashing hound of unknown origin. Chip, Mayflower and I would leave the confines of the barn and pasture on those afternoons on a quest to find . . . ? Adventure has no defined course or destination.

The road that led through the woods was a two-rutted lane lined on both sides by a mixture of pine trees and sweet gum. Some of the seedlings clung to the edge of the little ditch as a trickle of water slipped slowly and silently past. The trees were fairly young, having taken seed after the last field had been harvested nearly thirty years ago. Pine needles covered the ground under the trees, and a sprinkling of gum balls (little prickly orbs that fall from gum trees) created a cover that reminded me of an auburn-colored chenille bedspread.

The three of us proceeded through the woods on our undetermined quest. We in no way looked like a triumvirate from a medieval story. While Mayflower was nothing like a prancing charger, she was much more elegant that Don Quixote's Rocinante. And I was certainly no knight in shining armor. Perhaps like the Spanish nobleman, I could have been a knight clad in flannel, jeans and boots. But the quest was just as noble nonetheless.

As we ambled along, Chip (the Sancho Panza of this trio) would occasionally run off by himself in search of unknown quarry. In a short time he would reappear, panting from the effort and pleased to rejoin the quest.

At some point I decided to take the path less traveled and turned off the woods road and began to wind among the trees. I brushed the hanging pine boughs away as we proceeded through the older forest. Many of the trees in this part of the woods had been here for half a century or more, surviving somehow the saws and axes of the timber crews that had been so much a part of the lumber industry in this area. The limbs spread out and created a canopy that created a shadowy filigree of light as the sun began to go down. Mayflower stepped adroitly over fallen branches, occasionally snapping small twigs.

In a few minutes we came out into an open area, a dormant field. The late afternoon sun lit the old field with rays of sunshine that burst through the trees. There was a large, sturdy oak tree, oddly placed among all the pines. I dismounted and went over to that tree, sat down beside it with my back against its trunk. I let Mayflower's reins drop as she stood with her head down beside me. Chip came over and put his big head in my lap. I heard a bird skipping through the leaves. I was swept up in the peacefulness.

Then I heard the sound of traffic, of trucks and cars as they passed down the four-lane highway which, as I found, was only a couple of hundred yards away.

That was the defining moment when I realized that, often, we expect wonderful things to be somewhere far away. In reality, though, the wonder of it all is right where we are if we just look for it.

Bill Thompson is a speaker and author who lives just down the road, in nearby Hallsboro.

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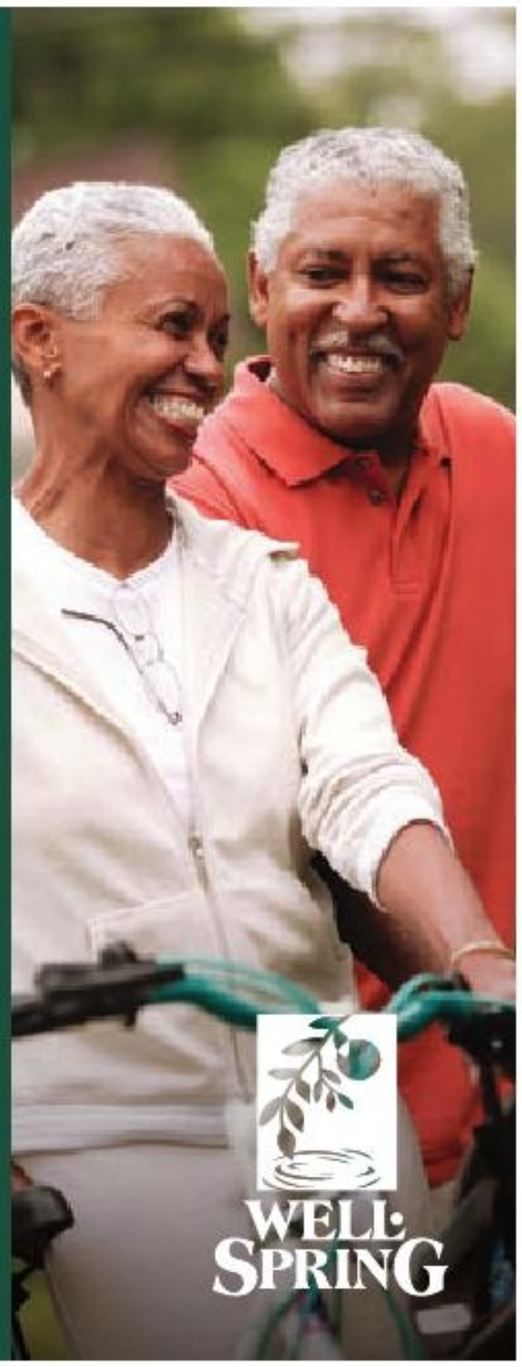

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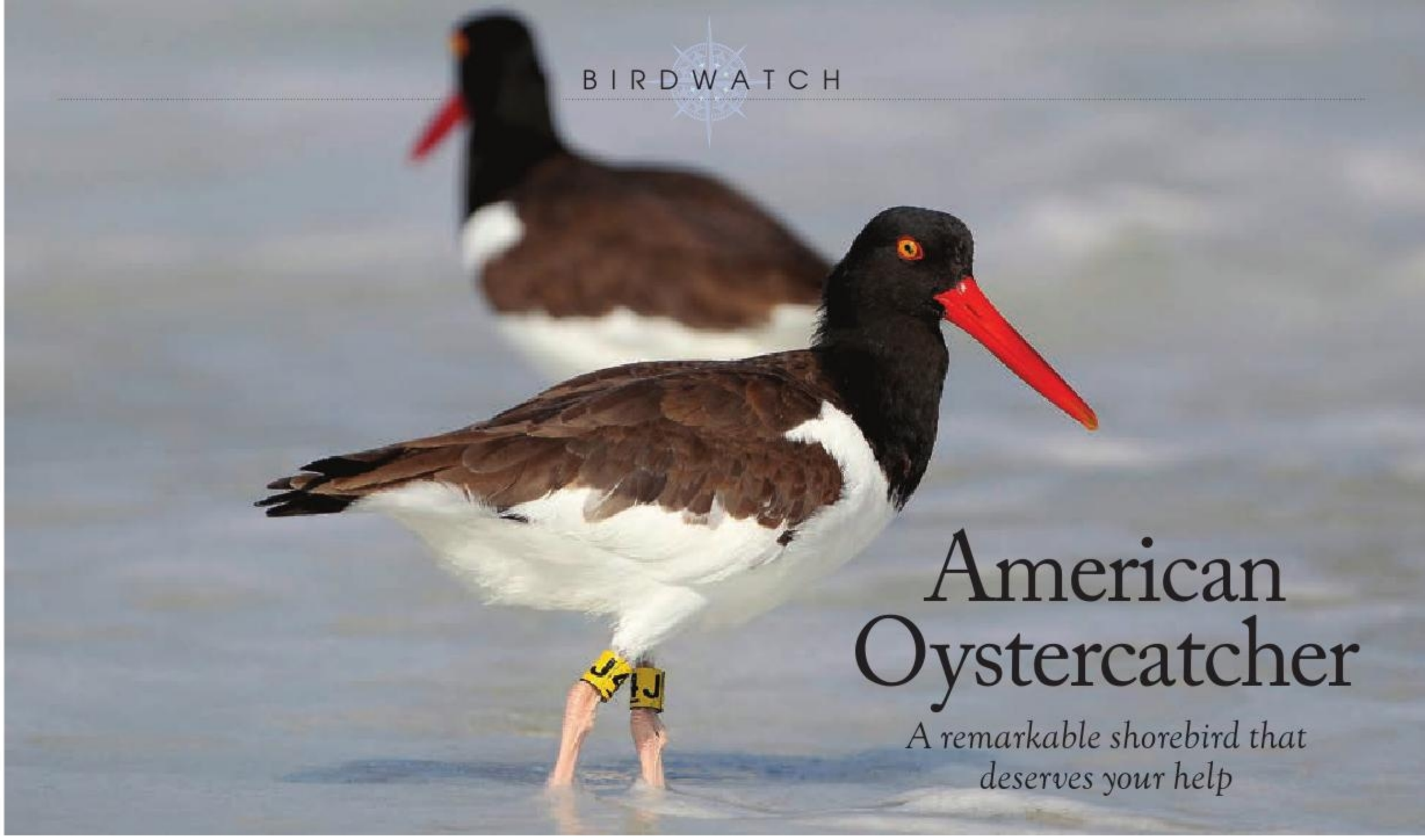

American Oystercatcher

A remarkable shorebird that deserves your help

By Susan Campbell

Surely anyone who lives along the southeastern coast of North Carolina has noticed the wide variety of birds that make their home, at least part of the year, along our shoreline. Many species are drab and seem to blend with their surroundings. There is one, however, that really stands out: the American oystercatcher. This large shorebird has a black head, brown back and wings, and a white chest and belly — not an unusual combination in the bird world. But with its long, bright red-orange bill, pink legs, and the bright red ring around the eye, you can't miss it.

As much as these birds may be seen along the beach hunting for crabs or marine invertebrates, they are specialized feeders, adapted to feed on bivalves (oysters, clams, mussels). Not surprisingly, then, they can be found in rocky habitat where oysters and other mollusks tend to anchor themselves. At low tide, oystercatchers will walk through the beds looking for open clams or oysters. The birds will use their wedge-shaped bills to jab at the strong muscle that makes such prey inaccessible to other would-be predators. Once they've broken through the muscle, oystercatchers can easily feast on the soft tissue inside the shell. Sometimes, however, the chosen food item closes quickly on the bird's bill, which becomes fatal when the tide comes in again. American oystercatchers will also separate a loose shellfish, fly off with it, and then open it by bashing it against a rock. And they're adept at probing for razor clams that stay buried deep in marsh mud.

American oystercatchers create a nest site by making a shallow depression in the sand. They will choose an elevated spot along a dune line so as to be safe from high spring tides. The female will line her scrape with shell fragments, so that it blends in with the adjacent sandy surface. Two to four speckled eggs are incubated for up to four weeks. The sand-colored, downy young are well coordinated and will leave the nest area with their family the day of hatching. They will feed alongside their parents in the marsh or on the beach, protected and brooded regularly by their mother for several weeks until they acquire adult plumage and are able to fly.

It is probably no surprise that a ground nesting species of open terrain is very vulnerable. Oystercatchers are affected by human disturbance as well as the threat from ground predators, many of which (including gulls) are more numerous around human development. Fledglings can be run over by beach vehicles but also may fall into tire tracks. The rutted, soft sand traps the young birds and they can be an easy target for hawks or subsequent trucks or four wheelers making their way along the beach.

There is ongoing American oystercatcher research occurring along the North Carolina coast. Audubon, North Carolina State University and The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission and others are working to better understand this bird's ecology, distribution and movements in coastal habitats. You may see banded and color-marked individuals in the summertime. Not only do study birds have a metal numbered band on one leg, but they have colored plastic leg bands that identify individuals. Additionally, some of the birds carry solar powered transmitters that track year-round movements and hopefully fill in some of the big gaps we have in our knowledge about these fascinating animals. To help support this research, please consider "adopting" a study bird through the North Carolina Chapter of the Audubon Society. For more information, visit nc.audubon.org.

Susan would love to receive your wildlife sightings and photos. She can be contacted by email at susan@ncaves.com, or by calling (910) 949-3207.

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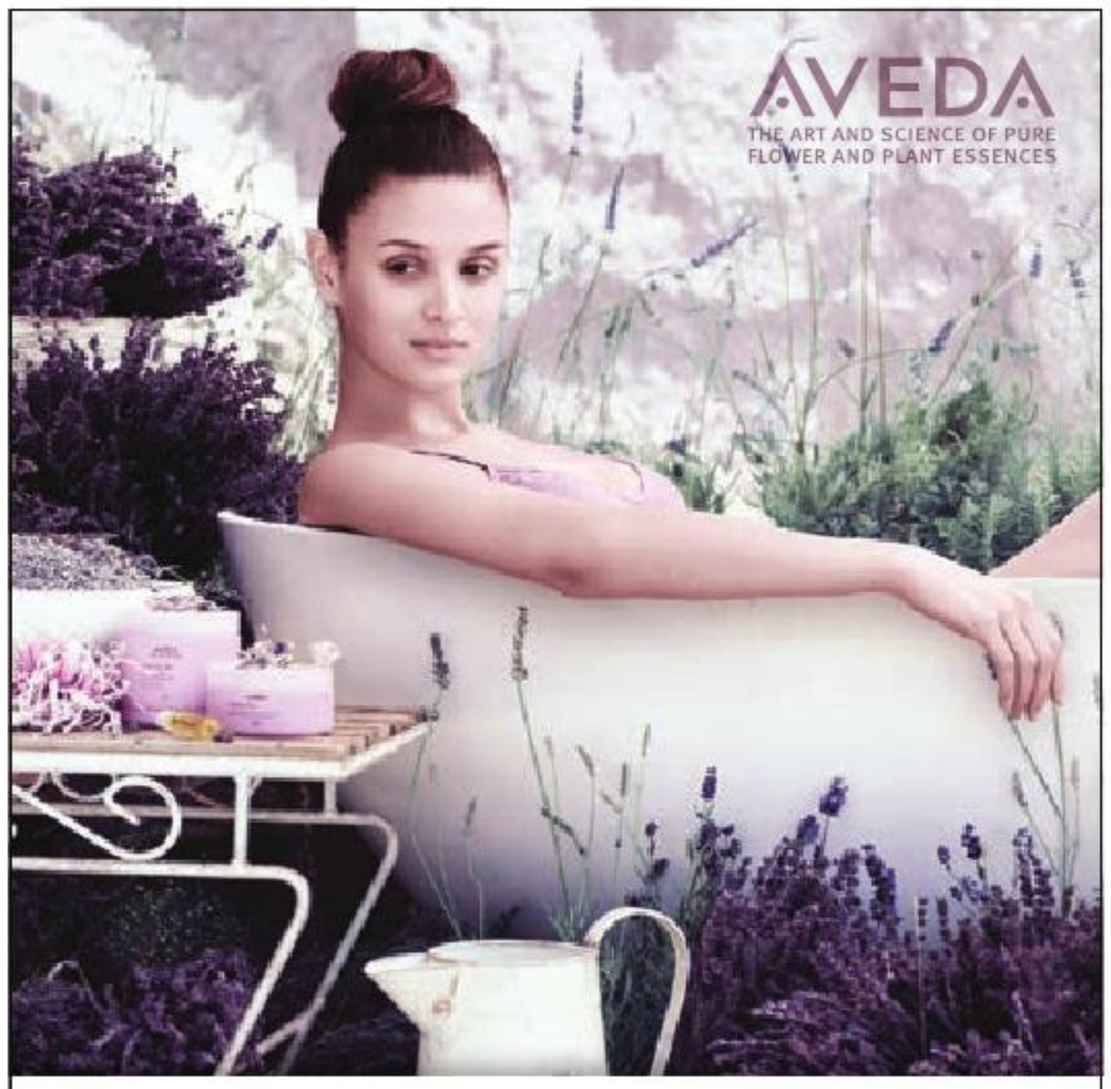

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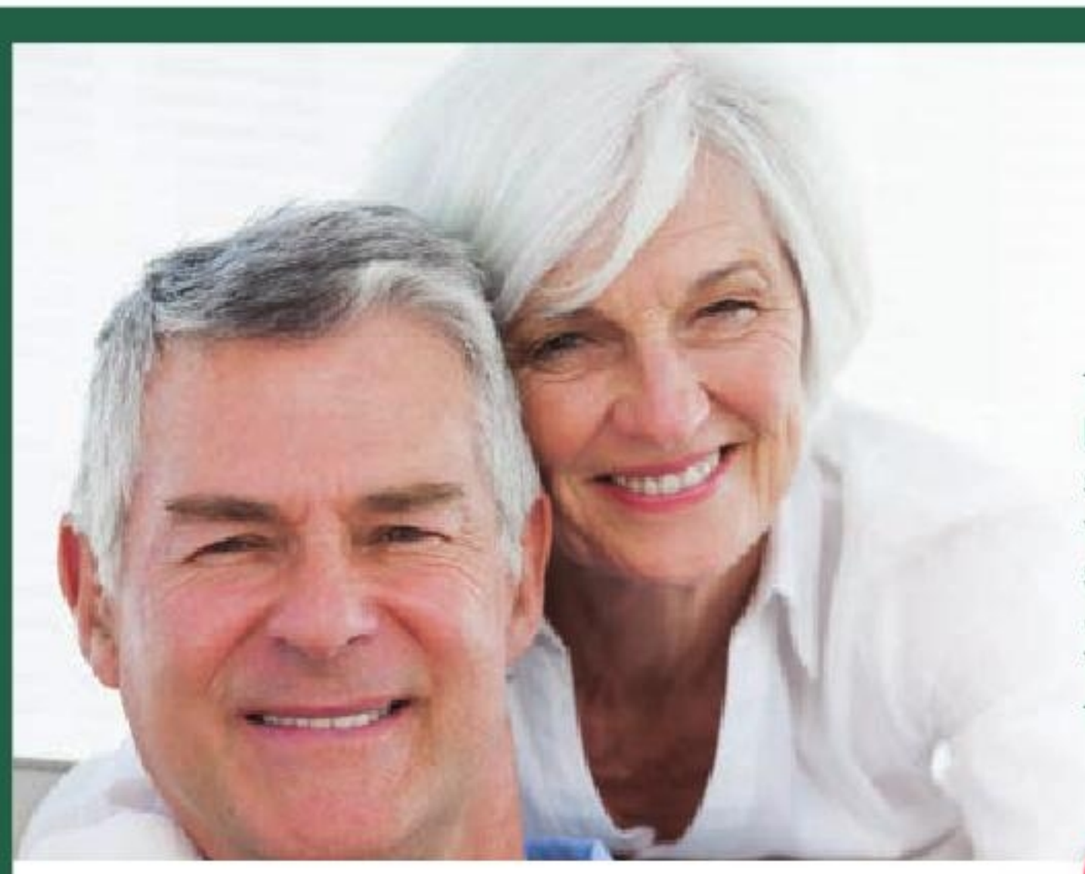

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Our Compleat Angler

It's the journey that counts more than the arrival

By Max Gaspeny

The blue-tinged tail broke the surface of the calm marsh water, waggling for a moment as a red drum slurped a fiddler crab from the mud before looking for the next course of its afternoon meal. The scene plays itself out in the shallows around the Cape Fear region monthly as full moons make for higher tides that let fish access normally dry marsh bottom.

No matter how many times an angler sees it, the scenario accelerates the pulse. Wading in eight inches of water, I took a few tender steps to put myself in casting range of the oblivious creature, bent at the knees and waist to reduce my 6'8" frame's profile. The critical moment had arrived and I fired, sending a soft, plastic shrimp arcing over the surface toward the target, within the fish's vision but not close enough to make it question why the prey had been delivered from the sky instead of the marsh mud.

I'd failed to compensate for a light wind from my left side, however, and the offering nearly smacked the copper-colored fish in the face. Its tail now in use for flight rather than feeding, I got my final glimpse of the drum as it departed swiftly into a nearby creek channel whose murky depths provided secure sanctuary.

This may read like a defeat, and it stung a bit to realize I'd been unable to fool a creature whose brain weighs less than the lure I was casting, but letdown is all part of the game. And it's a big part of why I love the game — there are no guarantees.

"That's why they call it fishing and not catching." A saying that's beyond trite in angling circles but like most adages, not without a strong measure of truth.

Inconvenient for certain, this fact has frustrated myself and untold anglers the globe over, as thousands of dollars and massive amounts of time and preparation are often tied to an angling quest only to end in "failure." The value overall, however, is in the experience, not the outcome, and the defeats only sweeten the eventual successes.

I'd spent my afternoon in the company of ospreys, egrets and herons (all better anglers than any human will ever be) and in a place beyond any social or work concerns. As always, the time on the water left me calmer and in a better frame of mind to tackle any of those issues, which no longer seemed nearly so pressing after my own attempt at participating in the food chain.

Fishing has been a lifelong passion, and the experience only gets more rewarding by the year. As a child, my father drove me to Greensboro-area lakes and ponds, where I casted for sunfish and bass while he found a decent spot to crack a novel. My mother once successfully bribed me with the promise of a new bass lure to stop whining about heat and boredom until Bill Clinton made a brief (and rather late) campaign appearance at the Piedmont Triad International Airport en route to his 1992 election.

Fishing remained one of my few healthy pursuits during my teenage years, and I worked at several of the local lakes as much for the free boat rentals as the paltry paychecks.

My Uncle Vic is the other member of the family who shares the fishing bug, and he followed it from Tidewater Virginia to the Florida Keys in the early '70s with fifty dollars in his pocket. Guiding anglers to tarpon, bonefish and other glamour species that ply those azure waters has been his only source of income since. Yearly trips to visit him and fish since my youth taught me I'd only find happiness at the edge of the sea and led to UNCW as the only acceptable choice when it came to higher education.

Since, I've had the fortune to pursue just about every fish that swims in the south Atlantic, from red drum, flounder, and speckled sea trout in the marshes to tuna, marlin, and swordfish fifty to eighty miles out to sea. If fish are like runs in baseball, there have been as many strikeouts as grand slams; but connect or miss, I've never failed to learn something on a fishing trip and never returned to land without the desire to cast it off again as soon as possible.

Several people have marveled at my ability to forget conversations and events in my day-to-day life, but recall extraordinarily minute details from a decade-old day on the water. My reasoning is that the important stuff sticks with me.

I've met and fished with some of the greatest talents in the angling world and made lifelong friends based on this fundamentally simple pursuit. I've landed some incredible fish, battled others for hours only to reel in a pulled hook or broken line, and I won't take back a minute.

The endless problem-solving exercise that is angling is, at its essence, a basic challenge — put food in front of fish and reap reward. No two situations are ever exactly alike, however, and adapting to those vagaries is where the fun comes in. Like most things, the devil is in the details. If I'd adjusted for the breeze, my next choice would likely have been whether to take that red drum home for dinner or send it back on its way to terrorizing the marsh's shrimp and crabs.

Whether I'm standing in under a foot of water or floating over more than a thousand, the emotions are the same and the chase is a consistent thrill. There's no predicting where I'll be or what will be happening in my life in a year or a decade, but rest assured that if I'm not fishing, I'll be trying to figure out when, where, and how I can be.

Max Gaspeny is a lifelong angler who's lived and fished in the Cape Fear region since attending UNCW in 2001. He's currently keeping up with the saltwater action throughout North Carolina as editor of Fisherman's Post Newspaper.

Secret Wildernesses

Thanks to UNC Wilmington, two exceptional area nature preserves await your discovery

By Virginia Holman

Our long brutal winter, now an unpleasant memory, has left us with one parting gift: spring fever of pandemic proportion. Free from the paws of the polar vortex, we've reached the balmy shores of May gobsmacked and giddy. The azaleas are a dizzying, dazzling pink, impertinent songbirds herald the day well in advance of civil twilight, and mop-headed surfers rise with the sun to skim the glittering aquamarine waves near Shell Island. Wherever there is an expanse of fresh mown lawn, young people tumble together in complicated knots. Most of us, regardless of age or shape, don wide-brimmed hats and bathing suits and swagger onto the beach. We flaunt our imperfect, dimpled, exquisite human bodies because we live at the coast — and as my neighbor says, "If you're lucky enough to live at the beach, you're lucky enough."

Still, for those of us who are wilderness lovers, full-blown spring fever during the workweek is arguably the season's cruelest malady. It can't be remedied with lunch beside the closest retention pond, no matter how sweet its flowering Bradford pear trees and spring peepers. By 11:30 a.m. the afflicted are anxious to slip off into the shelter of a more substantial wild space for an invigorating run, gentle stroll, or silent meditation. We are restless people who need to briefly inhabit a place with a few acres of trees to feel the tension inside us unspool — only then are we restored enough to return to our desks, robust, ready to tackle the afternoon.

Though the Wilmington metro area isn't yet renown for its attention to natural spaces, it's making significant strides. Thanks to UNCW and the North Carolina Coastal Land Trust's collaboration with local visionaries, there are two special public wilderness areas where urban-working nature lovers can go to re-energize themselves on a long lunch break or between the workday's end and suppertime. Most people in the Wilmington area have never visited them. But they are right here, hidden in plain sight.

Bluethenthal Wildflower Preserve

If you work or attend school at UNCW, you are near one of the area's best kept wilderness secrets. This ten-acre preserve is the result of a collaboration between former UNC Wilmington Chancellor William Wagoner, Mrs. Janet Bluethenthal, and an admirably forward-thinking Board of Trustees. In 1973, this visionary team collaborated to set aside these ten acres of woodland as a wildflower preserve "forever protected from all other uses." At the time, the university was undergoing dramatic growth, and this action preserved this natural space from irredeemable destruction. The preserve is primarily used for education and research by faculty and students. Yet it's also a campus oasis: students, staff, faculty and the public can slip away from the hive of activity at the university and escape down Bluethenthal's labyrinth of forested trails.

For those who wish to linger, small benches are scattered throughout the preserve. Most of the trails lead to a small wetland, and on a recent walk through Bluethenthal I observed a pileated woodpecker on an old pine near the entrance, hermit thrush, ruby-crowned kinglet, and Carolina wren. Two students sat on the long benches near the dark glassy pond, doing homework in the dappled green light. Bluethenthal is a surprisingly quiet little sanctuary in the middle of UNCW's busy campus.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY VIRGINIA HOLMAN

Ev-Henwood Nature Preserve

Those who live and work near the Waterford area in Leland are a short five-mile drive to one of the most beautiful and unspoiled nature preserves in the Wilmington metro area. In 1991, this 174-acre coastal forest was donated "in perpetuity" to UNCW by Mr. Troy Henry and his family for preservation and nature education.

The grounds of Ev-Henwood have been beautifully maintained, with informative signage about the local flora and fauna, and well-spaced observation platforms along Town Creek. In 2005, Mr. Henry further ensured the area's protection by designating 64 acres of this land as a conservation easement. This easement area is part of an extensive effort by the North Carolina Coastal Land Trust to protect the Town Creek corridor. So far, the North Carolina Coastal Land Trust, through its collaborations with private landowners, UNC Wilmington, Brunswick County, and local businesses such as International Paper, has preserved over 4,000 acres of land along Town Creek from development. Why? Not only do these easements preserve a beautiful natural area, but the preservation of this area helps mitigate stormwater pollutants and sediments associated with large scale development from entering the Cape Fear River, our local source of drinking water.

Ev-Henwood has several trails that feature several distinct eco-systems on the property, including upland forest, old field succession, and wetland areas. Professor Roger Shew of UNCW's Department of Geology routinely uses the property for applied learning in his senior sustainability class.

"When you walk the trails at Ev-Henwood," he says, "you can see what Brunswick County looked like in the early eighteenth and nineteenth centuries." Shew notes that Ev-Henwood is valued not only for its beauty but also for its historic significance. In fact, he tells me that one of the trails at Ev-Henwood leads to an old tar kiln from the 1800s. The kiln was used to produce naval stores from pine stumps and roots; the resin extracted from the kiln was used to make tar to waterproof ships, turpentine and varnish. Since at one time Ev-Henwood was forested with longleaf pine, his sustainability class and the North Carolina Sierra Club have worked to plant over 450 longleaf pines on the property. "The idea behind sustainability practices is that people use the land and then leave it in as good or better shape than they found it."

Even if you're not particularly interested in local history or sustainability, you'll be awed by the beauty of Ev-Henwood. On a recent seventy-five degree Saturday afternoon, my husband and I walked for an hour or so on the trails along Town Creek. We saw red-headed and red-bellied woodpeckers, a northern harrier, a kestrel, and several golden-crowned kinglets. We marveled at "old Gus," the 1,000-year-old cypress, and crossed a small earthen bridge between a verdigris swamp and the obsidian waters of Town Creek. We watched a great blue heron rise from the dwarf palmetto that line the banks, and fly deep into the forest. The air was clear and fresh, and we sat quietly on a bench overlooking a small pond. All we could hear was birdsong and the wind in the trees. We usually pass only one or two people when we visit. The long meandering trails easily allow visitors to feel like they have slipped the leash of daily urban life, and are wild and free, alone in the wilderness.

Interested in visiting?

Bluethenthal Wildflower Preserve is located off Price Drive on the Campus of UNCW. For more information, visit uncw.edu/physicalplant/arboretum/bluethenthal.htm, or call (910) 962-3243.

Ev-Henwood Nature Preserve is located at 6150 Rock Creek Road NorthEast, Leland. A downloadable brochure with trail maps is available at uncw.edu/physicalplant/arboretum/ev-henwood/documents/evhenwood-brochure.doc. For more information: (910) 253-6066

Information about the North Carolina Coastal Land Trust can be found at www.coastallandtrust.org

Author Virginia Holman teaches in the Creative Writing Department at UNC Wilmington. She is also ACA certified Level 3 Coastal Kayak Instructor and guides part time with Kayak Carolina.

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Nurture

(for my daughter, one month a mother)

There is a beauty to the body wracked by birth,
that blood sacrifice of the self, every mother a martyr.

If time were a book, the page of the present
and the page of the future might elide,

your daughter able to see the smudges
beneath your eyes as something other than night

bruised by her cries. Segments of sleep
like some bittersweet citrus. But after a month,

your baby has learned the comfort of your hands,
the cadence of your breath as it falls on the soft fur

of her scalp. Envision every cell as something
that needs to be wrapped by what we have labeled

love, the body a parcel we must ship to some
nebulous future. Bathe and swaddle, diaper and nurse.

For now, your chore is to tend to the immediate,
that your lips might learn the taste of her skin.

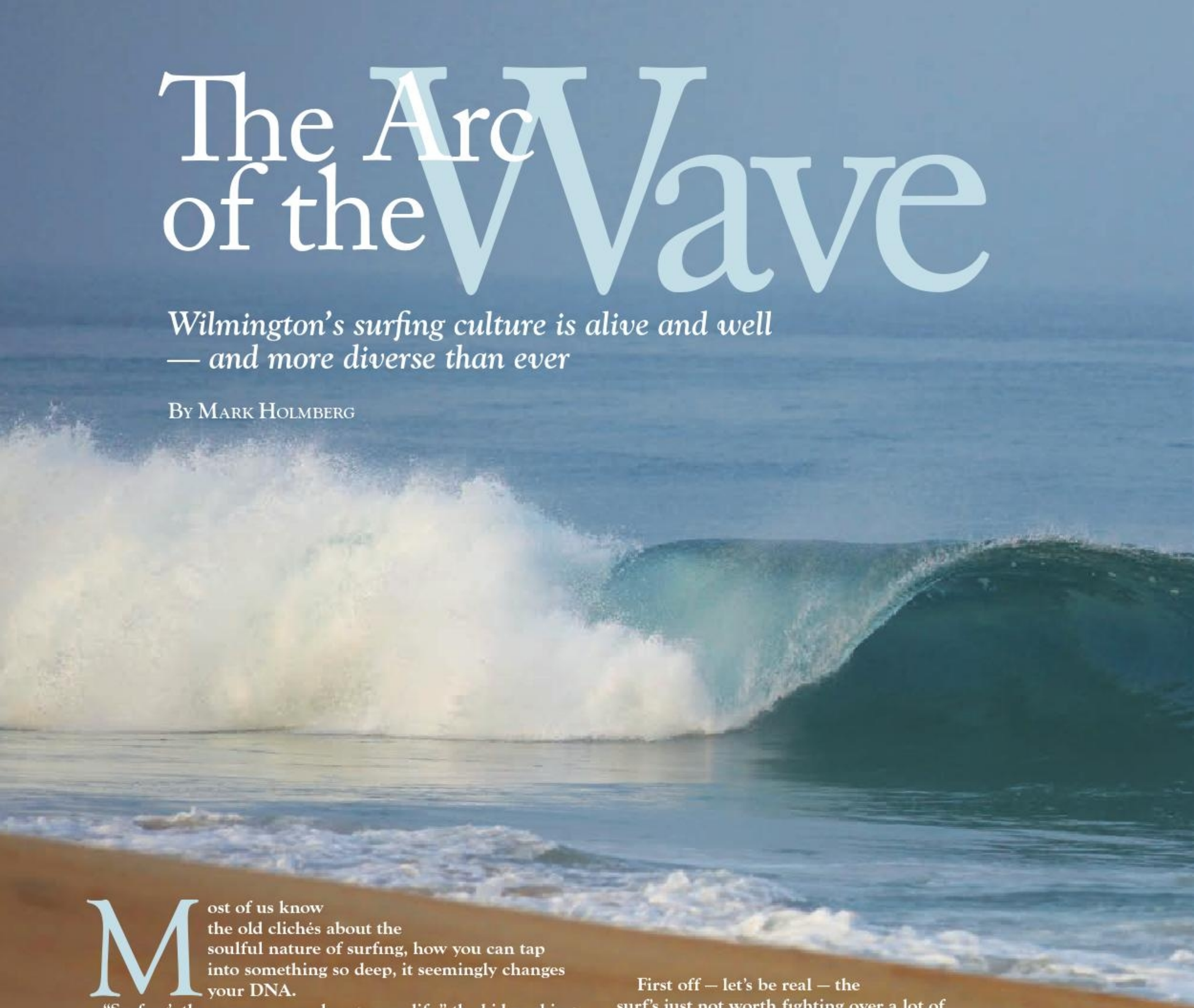
— *Lavonne J. Adams*

Lavonne J. Adams, the Gilbert-Chappell Distinguished poet for Eastern North Carolina, teaches at UNCW. She is the author of Through the Glorieta Pass *and two award-winning chapbooks.*

The Arc of the Wave

Wilmington's surfing culture is alive and well — and more diverse than ever

By Mark Holmberg



Most of us know the old clichés about the soulful nature of surfing, how you can tap into something so deep, it seemingly changes your DNA.

"Surfing's the source — can change your life," the kid working in the surf shop told Keanu Reeves in the 1991 movie *Point Break*.

But the clichés happen to be true.

We spoke to surfers up and down the coast and heard things like "surfing made me a better person," "it kept me out of trouble" and "it frees my mind," as carpenter Kevin McCausley put it.

All of which — along with some key movies, commercials and big-ticket male and female surf legends — has shaped the latest hurricane wave of popularity to hit surfing.

This has meant unpleasant crowds in many of the world's best surf spots. Big money and slick magazines have pushed a very aggressive, muscular style in the water that has added to the attitude.

Some here, like well-known musician/surfer Jason Shi and longtime board shaper Greg Eavey, believe that has sapped some of the very soul from the sport.

But not so much here in coastal Carolina.

First off — let's be real — the surf's just not worth fighting over a lot of the time.

And there are countless little sandbar breaks, from Emerald Isle to Holden Beach, and beyond. You can paddle or boat to even more isolated spots.

If you want to surf alone, you still can.

So the surf tribe — those who have saltwater in their veins — remains fairly open and real here.

"It's very laid-back," Eavey says. "You can find the dishwasher surfing next to the guy who owns the restaurant — or the island."

And there are plenty of seriously good surfers here, with lots of styles. From youngsters who can surf like old-timers to old-timers who can still surf like kids.

Yes, slashing and flash is plenty cool here, too. But the soul remains on the Emerald Coast

Check it out — can change your life.

The Young Ripper

At 14, Sean Brennan knows a bit about faith and life.

He attends Myrtle Grove Christian School. He speaks with maturity and respect.

Part of it, he says, comes from his regular soul sessions in the Atlantic Ocean off Wrightsville Beach.

"It kind of makes you an all-around better person," he says after a recent afternoon of wave carving.

He surfs with a grown man's fearlessness and power, shining among some of the other young stars who ride for South End Surf Shop.

Most youngsters his age have no idea what they'll do when they grow up.

Sean knows his path will include surfing.

"It's something I'll do forever."

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK HOLMBERG

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOSHUA CURRY

The Rocker

Jason Shi may be the luckiest surfer on Wrightsville Beach.

When he's not on tour with ASG, his world-known, fast-and-heavy rock band, he's alert for surf on the Emerald Coast.

You can find him walking the beach a short distance from his house with his Dalmatian when the surf is weak — as it frequently is — or out there on it.

Just one of the tribe.

"You're all out there bobbing, staring at the horizon," he says. "Not saying much. But together."

There's a shared spirituality that "I don't think exists anywhere else, outside of meditation."

This skateboarder/snowboarder who caught the surfing bug while attending UNCW is surf-lucky beyond his home location.

ASG is a popular band in the surf world. Partly because it's a band of surfers, but also because of its carving, crushing style.

Jason doesn't just sing and play guitar, he shreds. His eyes bug out; the veins bulge on his neck as he lays it all out like he's being chased by a killer, hurricane-lashed wave.

So the band gets called by the wave states and nations. California often.

"Played Hawaii four times. Costa Rica, Puerto Rico, Mexico . . ."

They tour the East Coast with surfboards in their trailer.

So he can appreciate the talent here. (He singles out Zack Thompson, Justin Perry, Rob Brown and Matt Yonkers as the young, strong surfers with soul.)

And he can savor the comparatively mellow vibe in the water here, even when the surf is firing.

"There's a little bit of verbal combat" when someone doesn't abide by the simple rules of priority. "That's as it should be."

But otherwise, Jason says, it's a peaceful tribe on the long sandbars where there's room to share the horizon.

The Medicine Man

At 52, Paul Gainey is a brand-new surfer.

"It's an unbelievable experience," says the pharmaceutical sales representative as he takes a breather from his February surf session on the South End of Wrightsville.

"It changed my whole life. Getting a wave and riding it in, you feel free, you feel alive!"

The water is 48 degrees. But Paul isn't cold in his Rip Curl 4/3 wetsuit and booties. Just paddle-worn. Catching his breath for another go at it.

He says he took up surfing last year to spend more time with his son and daughter, who also have the bug.

He has taken lessons. He practices his "burpees," surfing exercises in which you snap quickly to your feet from a prone position, then leap straight up as high as you can.

"I can't rip, but I can get up and ride it in. It's a great accomplishment."

Paul has lost weight. Toughened up.

Surfing has truly been the best medicine, even with a long drive to do it.

"I feel better about myself," he says. "I feel like I'm a better person."

Son Cameron agrees. "It's really given him motivation to be more active and healthy."

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK HOLMBERG

But he has always liked his dad. Cameron says he's a good man, the kind of guy you don't mind sharing a wave with.

Paul gathers his breath and his Walden medium longboard. Time to get in another surf before the long drive home — all the way to Raleigh.

The Shaper

There are many surfers and surfboard makers on the Emerald Coast, but if you put your ear to the beach and listen, you might hear the name Greg Eavey.

"I like the flowy stuff," this rather mystical 60-year-old says from his latest shop on the Topsail end of Hampstead.

Eavey can appreciate the lip-smashing, aerial-slashing, trick-heavy acrobatic style of surfing that is part of its latest round of uber popularity.

But he'd much prefer a soulful arc, a waterman gliding, sensing and milking the wave's power — like a lover instead of a fighter.

"I like to see the person connect all the dots," he says. "Go down the line. There's a certain beauty to it."

That's the kind of surfboard he builds.

Yes, he can and has made slashing short boards, many of them. He rode 'em for years.

Longboards are for wave-hogging geezers, right?

But when he tried a good one back in the '90s, "I thought, holy shit! What have I been missing?"

This is a deep guy who has been around. A musician. He doesn't suffer fools. When he looks at you, he's seeing you.

He's not doing all this old-school hand-shaping and airbrushing and deep-glow glassing for money. There's just not enough in it, Greg says, even at $1,000 per.

"I just want to keep it going, to preserve it."

And he says there's something new going on — a new twist on the old longboards from the '50s and '60s.

It's not "vintage" or "retro," he says. It's more like taking the best of the old designs that really surfed and then continuing the thought, the evolution.

Yes, it's still "one fin, one world, one love," and it would take a practiced eye to tell a new wave longboard from a classic Dale Velzy, but different they are.

As is the way they're surfed.

"Some of the young guys have grabbed into that '50s and '60s thing" and are building on it, he says. "They're the ones who are pushing it."

It's that old soulful arc Eavey loves, with a fresh interpretation.

But with that same great destination, he says.

"It's the freedom the regular world can't give you."

PHOTOGRAPH BY ERIN PIKE

The Lone Wolf

Bob Stephenson almost always surfs alone.

Not so much because he wants to, but because other surfers don't find his nice Kure Beach sandbar.

"I don't have to compete for waves. There's plenty of space."

The break is right there, so close to his condo he could practically throw a frying pan into it from his deck during high tide.

The 65-year-old retiree carefully studies the waves from his living room as he sips a lovingly crafted cup of espresso. Latte, cinnamon. A ritual.

"Almost good enough," he says, his pale eyes squinting in the sun at the surf. The swell is sketchy, mixed up. And the water is February cold. It's never too cold for this lone wolf, but no point in tumbling in frosty mush.

This is his world. There are the guitars he plays. His state-of-the-art stereo. There's his kitchen, right there. His old Harley Sportster is parked directly below.

And the surf.

"Started surfing in 1959," he says. "Massachusetts. I was ten years old. Wooden board."

Instant addict: "The feeling of taking off on a wave. Man, it feels like you're flying!"

He's a lean, weatherbeaten man who owned a metal-recycling business. The kind of guy who might be missing a finger or two.

He kept his fingers and did well enough to travel surf. But mostly he chased the waves and fought the territorial crowds in the surprisingly strong waters of New Jersey.

He and his wife retired down here to catch their breath.

And then she died.

Bob surfs. For the past two years he hasn't left the island much. He has worked on a few houses.

He plays music, cooks, rides his bike, surfs.

"It's a beautiful thing to wake up to," he says, nodding at the beach.

Too pleasant not to share. "It's nice to have company once in a while."

So, a few months back, he started venturing out. Going to music shows, occasionally jamming during open mic blues nights.

And he found a lady-friend. Now Bob is back in the world.

Say hello if you see him out. Clap if you hear him play.

But still, don't expect to see him in the more crowded beach breaks.

"I prefer to surf alone."

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK HOLMBERG

Father and Son

"We surf wherever there are waves," says Josh Mihaly. "Figure Eight, Mason's, Wrightsville . . ."

The "we" is Joshua, a Wilmington landscape architect, and his 12-year-old son, Dylan.

Josh has been surfing for twenty-five years. He started pushing his son into waves four years ago, when Dylan was 8.

"There's nothing more important," Josh said as they finish a sunny winter surf. "It'll last a lifetime."

Dylan nods happily, even though most kids would shiver at the thought of a swim in 50-degree water.

"Whenever there are waves, it's fun," he says. "Once you get a good one, you're stoked."

There are limits, though. "We go by the 100-degree rule. If the water and air temperatures add up to 100, that's warm enough," Josh says.

Father and son share a very similar, almost conspiratorial smile that seems to say surfing together generates its own special kind of warmth.

PHOTOGRAPH BY BROWNIE HARRIS

The All-Go Surfer Girl

Airlie Pickett has been surfing the emerald waters off Wrightsville and Masonboro "pretty much since I was born."

As a toddler, "my parents used to put me on the nose of their boards."

Her mother, East Coast Longboard Champion and well-known surf instructor Jo Pickett, said her baby girl wore as much sunscreen as baby powder.

"She was born in June, so she was on the beach immediately," Jo recalls as we relax with coffee at Grinders on a recent rainy and flat day.

Airlie, named after the legendary gardens about two miles from the Atlantic, explained that's been her world in the 21 years since.

Almost every day, "It's not what am I going to do, it's where am I going to go surfing?"

Because her mom runs exotic surf trips, Airlie has surfed all through Central America, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, California and elsewhere.

And Jo, like many serious surfers, is a self-trained oceanographer and weathercaster, leading her daughter to the local spots most likely to be firing on any given day.

So Airlie has a good view of our surf culture.

"We're really polite surfers," she says of the local tribes. "It's the equivalent of holding the door open for people.

"It's mellow, but it's getting more aggro," she adds. "For so long it was an isolated community, but it's blown up . . . We've got the kids who will drop in on anyone."

And when the surf is firing, it can get seriously crowded. "I've seen five hundred people in the water on Masonboro [Island]."

Then there's the growing contingent of stand-up paddlers, who can hog waves because their paddles and giant boards mean they can jump on the swell well before the regular surfers can.

"They're usually pretty good about it," adds Airlie, who has an easy smile and those mellow, sun-faded eyes common to surfers.

Those eyes have also watched the other females in the lineup.

"There are a lot more girl surfers out in the water," she says. And while the guys far outnumber them, they get plenty of respect, "especially around here."

But the respect has to be earned, especially when the waves get big and heavy and the prime takeoff spots become crowded and crucial.

Airlie says it's her practice, wherever she's surfing, to immediately paddle out and "go to the biggest place, the heaviest peak and go. Doesn't matter if I get trashed. Just to show I will go.

"The second you don't go on an awesome wave," she says, "you're done."

PHOTOGRAPH BY ERIN PIKE

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK HOLMBERG

A Better Place

He takes old mirrors and windows and doors — anything, really — and finds a new reason for them to live, a new purpose to serve.

You can find him doing just that at the sprawling Recollections Antique Village on Carolina Beach Road that he and his wife own.

At least when he's not engaged in his primary purpose.

"I'm very addicted," says 37-year-old Quasi, aka John McNabb. "Being addicted to surfing has saved my ass many times."

This reggae musician readily admits he could have easily wiped out in the late-night party world, or got caught in the undertow of the don't-worry-just-drift mindset that can accompany island music.

Instead, his addiction has him roving the Crystal Coast, studying the underwater topography, the ocean, the weather and the sea life, including his fellow addicts, like the famously tough red-shirted surfers of the Shackleford Banks whaling island.

"Man, I was scared to death of those guys."

Quasi says currents of surfing take you to a better place.

"I think it makes you care about what happens in the ocean," he says from Recollections' main showroom during a recent poor day for surfing.

"You feel connected to the energy of the water while you're surfing — you're absorbing that energy."

Like many other longtime local surfers, Quasi can run down the list of all the prime southern North Carolina spots — Sunskipper, (Crap)-pipe, The Cove (among many others) — and mystical breaks, like The Waiting List on Masonboro Island.

"Heard about it for six years before I saw it work," he says.

Similarly, the right conditions on the South End of Wrightsville can whip up a fast, heavy monster left that can charge over the jetty there and peel all the way around the inlet.

That's where you'll find, he says, those who have found real purpose in that mysterious, ever-shifting coast.

Breathing Lessons

The art of free diving and becoming one with the sea

By Jason Frye

Under water, deep under water, 286 feet below the surface, time takes on a different meaning. Minutes stop mattering, and seconds dissolve at this depth. This is the place where only a few tendrils of light reach, and the world around you takes on an ethereal blue cast. This is the place where only a few humans can go on a single breath. Here, the way you measure time is in the slow, steady beat of your heart, and the searing, throbbing lungs in your chest, and all the while, you're pushing the fact that your one breath is running out to the back of your mind.

This is the world Ren and Ashley Chapman call home. They're freedivers; that is, they dive, and dive deep, with little more than a wetsuit, fins, mask, and a single breath. It started as a way to spearfish for dinner, then it took a competitive turn.

Ashley excelled at the sport and set one of her world records in 2012, a dive of 67 meters (that's 219 feet) on a single breath held for three minutes and fifteen seconds. Currently she holds four national records in freediving – three in depth disciplines, and one in the pool – and Ren acts as a safety diver at many competitions.

For a while that's all they did; they traveled, trained, competed, taught, ate, slept, and dreamed freediving.

Then along came Ani.

In October 2013, Ani took her first swim as she slid into the birthing pool. Not a minute old and already in the water.

Now, they're back to the old routine. Well, as back to it as you can be with a 7-month-old. They live on the *Nila Girl*, a '35 Pearson built in 1968 and refurbished over the last couple of years, travel from island to island and dive spot to dive spot, training, teaching and competing. During her pregnancy, another diver broke Ashley's world record and now, Ashley's ready to dive again in competition.

"She'll say she's not ready to go for the record yet," says Ren from the

cabin of the *Nila Girl*, anchored near George Town on Long Island in the Bahamas. The bay around the *Nila Girl* is crowded with sailboats, and he's pirating some neighbor's Internet so we can Skype. "Just watch, she'll tell you she's not ready."

"And I'm not," she interrupts. She bounces into the frame so I can see how serious she is. "I'm not. I'm just competing in Honduras to get back into it. We have more important things now than dive competitions."

Ren shrugs and gives an "I told you" grin.

"So she's not ready to go for the record, but don't be surprised if she breaks it."

When I first met Ren and Ashley, I sat in their Ogden living room overlooking the Intracoastal Waterway and we talked about the *Nila Girl* and of starting families and the finer points of freediving. Their business teaching freediving techniques, Evolve Freediving, was taking off, and they were making plans for their future. Winters in the Caribbean. Competitions. Classes. Back to Wilmington for a few months in late summer.

After we talked for a while, I asked about diving.

"How do you do it? How do you hold your breath for that long?"

They looked at each other, then at me, and Ashley asked, "Do you want to try to hold your breath for two minutes?"

I absolutely did and I said so.

That's when we began walking through what freedivers call "breathe ups." Breathe ups are breathing exercises where you inhale forcefully, exhale forcefully, and learn to control the growing panic in your head that wants you to open your mouth and fill your lungs with oxygen.

Ren and I breathed in and out, following Ashley's instructions as she walked us through the technique. When the time came for what's called the peak inhale, I took in a breath so big, I thought my lungs would burst and relaxed into the couch. If we'd been in the ocean, I'd be ten feet under by now.

In mountain climbing, they say a successful summit is one where you reach the top and then return safely. The same holds true to freediving. Once you do your breathe ups and dive, you keep time on your own internal clock, judging depth and breath and finding the right point to stop, turn, and swim to the surface. When you break through into the world above, another set of breathing exercises helps keep you conscious and returns your heart rate, blood oxygen levels and respiration rate to normal. It keeps you alive.

The key to successfully diving deep is knowing when to turn around.

Ren and Ashley started diving as a way to catch dinner, diving on the reefs and wrecks and structures near shore — in water ranging from thirty feet to more than 100 feet — and even the docks and piers on the Intracoastal Waterway, armed with a spear gun or Hawaiian sling (the elastic band powered spear you see on *Survivor*).

"We'd get flounder, sheepshead, grouper, hogfish, cobia, lobsters, all sorts of things when we'd dive," says Ashley.

"After a while, though, I started taking fish very selectively. Then I stopped bringing my [spear]gun at all," Ren says. "Now, diving is about *becoming* part of the underwater world rather than *observing* the underwater world."

"It's like you become part of the environment when you're down there," Ashley adds. "I think the fish and turtles look at scuba divers and say, 'What kind of animal are you? What's that thing on your back?' but freedivers, we sort of look like them, an animal moving through the world."

While many find the sport through scuba diving or spearfishing, the beauty and serenity of it keeps people coming back. Though there are the ones — the thrill seekers, the limit pushers, the challengers of man and nature — who stay for the rush of competition, be it against another person or just a personal best. One look at Ren's Facebook wall — where he occasionally posts a shot of his dive watch with a line like "new personal best" — and at Ashley's trophy case will prove the Chapmans to be members of this tribe, but a deeper look, into their hearts, will show you another side of the sport.

"I was there when we lost him," says Ren, speaking of his friend Nick, who made an unsuccessful dive attempt and couldn't be resuscitated. "Nick was a really good friend. He sailed the Caribbean with us multiple times. We'd travel together to competitions. We rode horses with him in Cuba. We dove with him in France."

His voice, heavy with emotion, trails off. Ashley, Ani in her lap, picks up the thread.

"Nick wasn't like most competitors. He wasn't patient with himself. He was a great man and a great friend, but very hard on himself. He pushed too far, he didn't listen to his body, and he just pushed too far."

We're all silent for a moment, and I feel like a heel for having brought it up.

"We've gone through a lot in the last year," Ashley says. Ren nods in agreement, still silent. "Ani, Nick, moving onto the boat, finding our place in the world after these two major changes . . . we've gone through a lot."

"It slows us down a bit, Nick's death and Ani's birth, it slows us down a lot, actually," Ren says. "We take more care now, appreciate all the moments a little more."

"There was a time when we only thought of ourselves, but with Ani, we're more altruistic and we can actually see the wider world," she says. "Nick's passing was tragic, but it's made us reassess what's important."

She smooths Ani's hair.

"Records aren't important anymore, they're just icing on the cake. When I surface, that's my reward. I had a beautiful experience in a world I can only visit for a short time, then I return to a world with Ren and Ani and our friends and family and my life. Diving can wait."

Under the Dome

For the unconventional Smiths of Wilmington, life beneath a geodesic dome is one with many blessings

By Ashley Wahl
Photographs by Rick Ricozzi

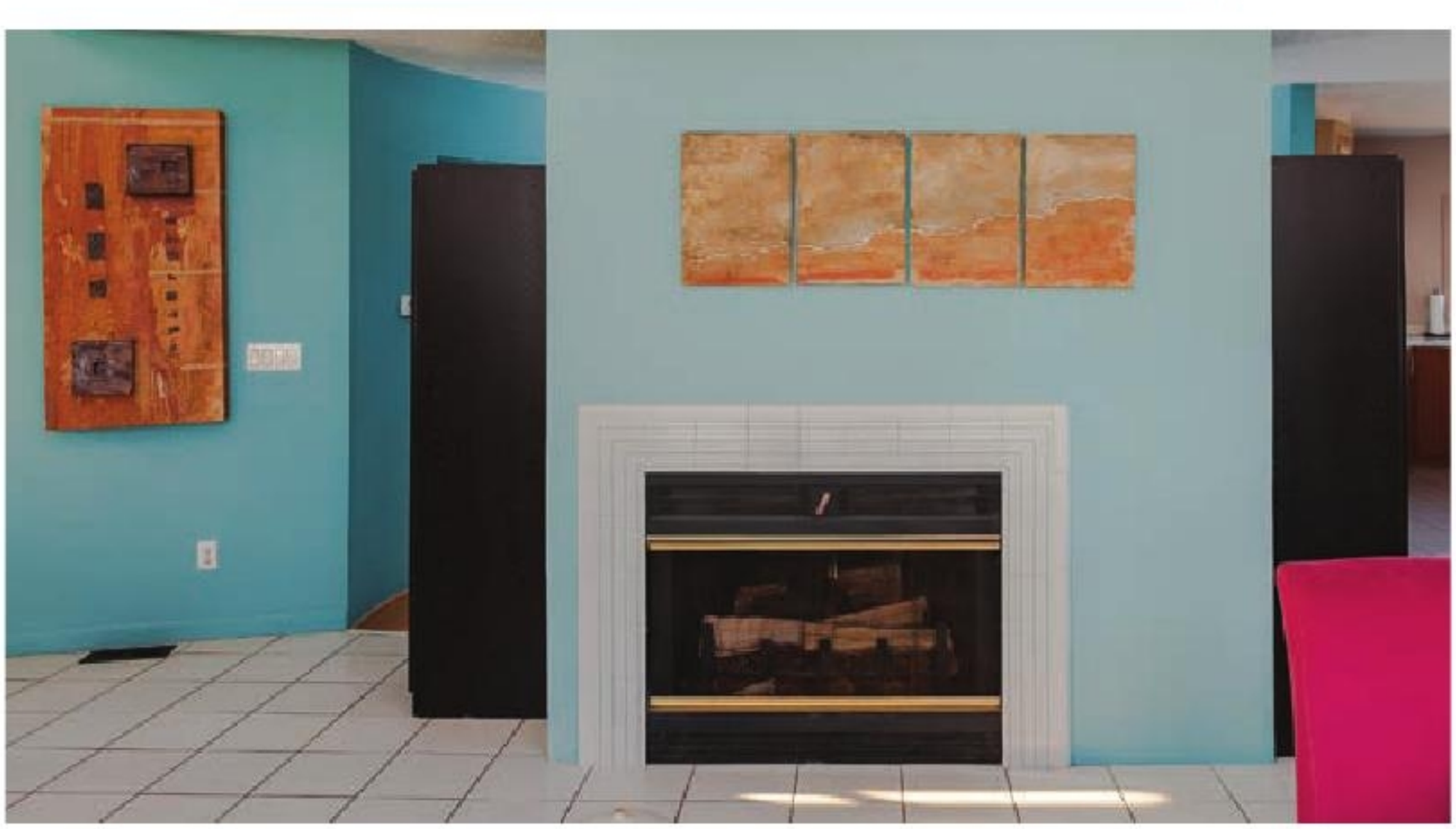
The future was bright. Ike was president. Bikinis were making waves. Tupperware and tail fins were all the rage. America was swollen with confidence and an overarching spirit of optimism for tomorrow.

As the country emerged from the Second World War, progress was, in fact, our most important product. And so it was in 1954 when 59-year-old visionary American architect R. Buckminster Fuller presented a revolutionary 42-foot paperboard structure at the Milan Triennale. Not only did he receive the Gran Premio award, organizations from the U.S. government to Kaiser Aluminum were drawn to the geodesic dome's unconventional, futuristic appearance and how it was strong, light, quick to assemble and so very practical.

Domes were the future of architecture, the media prognosticated.

When Vince Smith shares the story of his house — a geodesic dome situated on a point along the Intracoastal Waterway between Carolina Beach and Masonboro Inlet — he does not start with the construction of the shell or his series of hand-drawn blueprints or how the oaks along Market Street drew him to Wilmington in the first place. He begins in 1970, recalling the antiwar rallies of his youth.

Smith is seated on a red settee in the center of the dome, illuminated by a



Wall art is earthy and gallery-like. No clutter. Good feng shui. A closer look reveals Vicky as resident artist.

In the kitchen, beyond a picture window lined with ceramic cups from world travels, boats bob like corks in cerulean water. "By far my favorite feature," she says of the space.

sunbeam. Hexagonal skylights reveal a bright, cloudless sky. Pip, the rescue kitten, stretches his toes in semiconsciousness, repositions himself into a ball on the white tile floor. Smith does not notice. In his mind, the retired dentist is back at the Oval, Ohio State University, 1970. As he recounts being "maced, tear-gassed, hit by rocks thrown by cops," his voice is calm and gentle, appropriate for a space that feels like the inside of a bubble.

"Earth Day started when I was a junior in college," says Smith, who, like many of his radical-minded contemporaries, became passionate about conservation, saving the planet, living in harmony with the environment. He consulted the *Whole Earth Catalog*, the counter-culture Bible for those seeking self-sustainable, off-the-grid lifestyles. There, he saw his house of the future.

Suffice it to say that Vince Smith was hard-wired to understand geodesics. His boyhood was spent tinkering, constructing forts, assembling model boats, cars and planes. In high school, when he

expressed interest in civil engineering, his father, an engineer for NASA, told him he wouldn't like it.

"I could never work for someone else," says Smith.

Perhaps he knew Smith better than Smith knew himself.

So he pursued dentistry.

Because a triangle is twice as strong as a rectangle, Smith explains, and a sphere allows for the greatest volume of interior space with the least amount of materials, a spherical structure made of triangles is perhaps the most efficient human shelter ever invented.

For Smith, the "house of the future" was not a fad. It was a statement of principle. His would materialize in 1988.

First gray, then sea foam, now turquoise blue, Smith's dome is a landmark for local anglers. Built up on pilings, the 2,200-square-foot structure comprises sixty triangles.

"It is self-supporting," says Smith of the shell, which is attached to four-foot riser walls. "You don't need any interior walls for the roof."

Ask him what he likes most about it and Smith will tell you that this house is more durable and heat-efficient than rectilinear houses. He may even recall bits from the lecture Buckminster Fuller presented at OSU, or say that the house has been through four hurricanes. But when he smiles, looks out across the waterway at Carolina Beach, or perhaps up toward the skylights, the real answer is clear.

"I hate to feel closed-in," says Smith. Which is why, when he designed the house, he left it as open and breezy as possible.

In the dozens of domes Smith sketched in the years between undergraduate studies and actualizing the dome of his dreams, something was missing. The property would come. He wasn't worried about that. What Smith needed was a muse.

Having visited the Wilmington area on a camping expedition during dental school, Smith and his first wife bought a '70s-era brick ranch in nearby Tanglewood. This was not the future he'd imagined. Square house,

He consulted the *Whole Earth Catalog*, the counterculture Bible for those seeking self-sustainable, off-the-grid lifestyles. There, he saw his house of the future.

square marriage, square life. He dreamed of triangulated spheres, recalling the rebel passion of his youth. When he envisioned the future, he saw a round structure strong enough to withstand 200-mile-per-hour winds. Eventually, his marriage crumbled.

And then he met his current wife, Vicky.

"I designed this house for the two of us," says Smith.

In the center of the main living area, a ceramic chess set is situated on a glass-top table in between the red sofa and settee. Ceramic bowls line contemporary shelving. Wall art is earthy and gallery-like. No clutter. Good feng shui. A closer look reveals Vicky as resident artist.

Above the fireplace, a sequence of four unfired wall pieces is Vicky's interpretation of sunrise as seen from the sitting area near the kitchen. She scooped the colors — red, orange, yellow, green and gray — from the banks of the family clay mine in Greene County. After a decade working as a dental hygienist for Smith, she pursued her own dream. One studio art degree and a master's later, Vicky teaches ceramics at UNCW.

In the kitchen, beyond a picture window lined with ceramic cups from world travels, boats bob like corks in cerulean water.

"By far my favorite feature," she says of the space.

Up the bamboo stairs: a master suite which, like a loft, has no door. Décor is urban zen. On the wall: a framed Tibetan thangka from a flea market in Phoenix, Arizona. Cat No. 2 is sunning on the double reclining loveseat. The third is hiding.

From the master bathroom, where a telescope is pointed toward the picture window, the view is incredible — and not just the view looking out. The Jacuzzi tub, for which Vicky traded a 1973 VW Karmann Ghia convertible, overlooks the main living area downstairs.

When the Smiths stumbled upon perhaps one of the most coveted properties in the area (another story), they hired a contractor.

John Evans had taken boat building classes at Cape Fear Community College.

"Wood boats are very complicated," says Smith. "They aren't square."

Plus, Evans had built a dome in his backyard for Sufi meditation.

The shell was assembled in one day, but during a mini construction boom, finding subcontractors for non-rectilinear framing proved challenging. Start to finish, the project took nine months. Six weeks were spent searching for dry wallers.

"The roofers had never done anything like this," says Smith. "As it turned out, they laid nine layers of shingles." Ten years ago, Smith decided to replace the original roof with a composite material of white fabric and resin.

Downstairs, a semicircular hallway leads to a pie-shaped study, laundry and half bath, for which Vicky made the vessel sink. From the back deck, the Smiths once watched a young osprey snag its first catch. He flew so close, says Vicky, they could see the glint of light in the eye of the fish.

For three months last summer, the Smiths stayed at their cabin in Greene County while Susan Sarandon's makeup artist, Ma Kalaadevi Ananda, rented the space during the filming of *Tammy*.

According to neighbors, she held Sunday meditations here, says Vicky. "People would come, burn incense, chant. . . . When she left, she told us she'd blessed the house."

If the dome is blessed, then so are the Smiths.

"It's our perfect home," says Vicky.

Just as Vince Smith imagined it — maybe even better.

The Deep-Rooted Gardener

At Shelton Herb Farm, Meg Shelton honors her family's extraordinary heritage of two centuries on the land by growing exquisite herbs and vegetables

By Barbara J. Sullivan · Photographs by Mark Steelman

When Meg Shelton pores over seed catalogs and planting schedules in her office, a venerable 1830 white clapboard farmhouse outside of Leland, she's only yards away from the carriage path where her grandfather used to pull up in his horse and buggy after a long day of rural doctoring. She's within sight of the flowerbed where her mother planted zinnias and marigolds every year on Good Friday. She can see the magnolia she and her brother clambered up when they wanted to spy down on the world from their treehouse. The office, operational headquarters for Shelton Herb Farm, sits next door to Meg's own house on a large, wooded property on Goodman Road just off Highway 17 in Brunswick County.

Meg is one of those rare Americans living on the same plot of land as her great-grandparents, her grandparents and her parents — a place so dense with family history and a connection with the land that even the wild turkeys in her woods are descended from turkeys her great-grandfather might have hunted back in the 1860s. The homestead is one of North Carolina's Century Farms; although, in this case, it's been closer to 200 years that the Goodmans and their descendants have lived on the same piece of land.

The farm, now home to thousands of herbs, vegetables and flowers grown in the ground, in containers on wooden benches and in greenhouses and hoop houses, was originally the home of Meg's great-grandfather, Lt. Allison Goodman, a Civil War veteran who fought at Fort Fisher. His son, in addition to being a rural doctor, invested in the naval stores industry and bought up hundreds of acres of longleaf pine forest to tap for turpentine. As a teenager, Meg's father hunted in those same woods for rabbit, quail, duck and deer — sometimes with his friend Robert Ruark. Ruark later referred to his time on the Goodman property in his famous book *The Old Man and the Boy*.

Between the time Meg was a little girl helping her mother weed the vegetable garden and the time she returned as an adult, she's lived in places as close as Morehead City, Greensboro and Raleigh and as far away as Hawaii. Before coming full circle to the Goodman homestead she picked up two biology degrees, got married and started a family.

Her passion — she herself might even call it an obsession — with farming, and more particularly herb growing, began back in the 1980s when she was working full-time as a biology researcher for UNCW and raising three sons with her husband, Chuck. Never one to balk at hard work, she thought she might just take on one more challenge and grow her own food for the family. After she mastered the summer staples — tomatoes, beans, squash, melons, cucumbers and peppers — she began what evolved into a decades-long experiment with stretching the season. She realized she could grow lettuces, chard, mustard, kale, bok choy, sorrel, dill and cilantro in the colder months. She's been gardening twelve months a year ever since. Gardening year-round and eating fresh, tasty, locally grown food are at the heart and core of her philosophy.

Meg officially opened Shelton Herb Farm as a business in 1986. Since then she's become the undisputed queen of the southeastern North Carolina herb universe, growing everything from African blue basil to Corsican mint, from Spanish lavender to creeping mother of thyme, from multi-hued 'Numex Twilight' chili peppers to 'End of the Rainbow' heirloom roses. Roses — who knew? — are also herbs and make lovely edible flowers.

With two full-time employees and part-time help which varies with the seasons, Meg welcomes visitors at the farm six days a week. She also furnishes food to a host of local restaurants. Chefs from Brasserie du Soleil, Caprice Bistro, Circa 1922, Yosake, Nine, Rx and Pembroke's, among many others, treat their customers to Meg's winter greens, salad mixes, microgreens and a rainbow assortment of her edible flowers like pansies, nasturtiums, celosia, sages, citrus flowers and clover.

Meg knows her growing conditions intimately. The soil, for example, is naturally acidic and nitrogen-poor in this coastal savannah area. She points to the pitcher plants, sundew and Venus fly traps growing nearby — plants which have evolved over the millennia to trap insects as a way of boosting their nutritional

intake. "What does that tell you about our soil?" she asks with a knowing smile.

Soil is important to Meg. For years now she's been using organic methods of soil amendment such as piling thick layers of mulch on top of her perennial beds and letting it decay naturally to form a nutrient-rich compost for the plants. She uses the no-till method of planting, digging only between rows to create narrow walking paths. She reuses the soil in which the microgreens are grown as an amendment to the perennial beds. An added bonus: Instead of henbit and chickweed she gets unexpected "good weeds" like cilantro.

Weather is something of an obsession with most farmers. Meg is no exception. She's constantly calculating the amount of rainfall we've had, the length and severity of our winter freezes, even the phases of the moon. She's familiar with old-time planting guides like L.A. Niven's *The Progressive Farmer's Garden Book for the South* and the local wisdom that recommends putting in your beans "between the two Christmases" (i.e., December 25 and January 6). She consults the latest recommendations from the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service and, of course, the 10-day online weather forecast, which she considers a godsend. This is part of the art of gardening — determining the earliest possible date for setting out the tomato starts or for sowing squash seeds, knowing when the temperatures are headed for the low 20s so she can pop the protective polypropylene row coverings over her dozens of herb benches.

On nights when the temperatures drop down below freezing, her internal alarm clock is set to go off at midnight and 3 a.m., throwing her out of her warm bed and into a heavy coat and boots so she can make her way through the dark to the greenhouses where tender tomato plants, tea hibiscus and others will be damaged if the propane heaters go out. Each heater furnishes two-and-a-half nights worth of warmth, and she monitors them constantly.

Because she's such a believer in fresh, tasty and local, Meg has devoted her time and energy to supporting the burgeoning local food movement through groups like Down East Connect, a buyers' club supporting local growers; Tidal Creek Co-op, which works with a number of Community Supported Agricultural groups; and Feast Down East, which links small farmers with local markets. She was instrumental in establishing the now-thriving Saturday farmers market in downtown Wilmington, a project she'd been lobbying for over many years. She and her crew are regulars there and at farmers markets at Wrightsville Beach, Poplar Grove, Southport, St. James, Shallotte and Bolivia.

You would think this would be enough to keep anyone busy, but Meg Shelton is basically tireless. A few years ago, in 2011, the Wilmington YWCA named her one of its outstanding Women of Achievement. The prestigious award was given not just for her role in growing Shelton Herb Farms, an important small business in Southeastern North Carolina, but for her determined activism in preserving the environmental integrity of the area. When the Brunswick Energy Company planned to build a 150,000-barrel-a-day crude oil refinery along the Cape Fear River, she lobbied against it with a coalition of like-minded citizens and got it stopped. Similarly, when the Hugo Neu Corporation proposed an automobile recycling residue landfill in Brunswick County on Indian Creek, she joined forces with those who eventually blocked it. In her most recent and possibly most personal environmental battle of all, however, she was unsuccessful. She was unable to stop the North Carolina Department of Transportation from carving her family property in half with its extension of Highway 17 connecting highways 74/76 and 421, a process that involved clear-cutting virgin forest land, rich with wildlife habitat and of great personal meaning to her family.

But that's now a done deal, and back at the farm Meg has her hands full with spring madness. Her beehives are buzzing. The trees are bursting with flowers. The herbs are lush. Customers flock to enjoy the abundance of this well-loved, well-used farm at its most beautiful. They come to see the motley crew of chickens, roosters and hens; the three weed-scarfing pigs, Nutmeg, Munchkin and Magic Lantern; and to stock up on herbs, flowers, vegetables and microgreens by the cartload. Even gardeners with no more than an apartment balcony will buy one of Meg's famous "salad bowls," a mix of lettuces and greens in a portable container that can provide fresh pickings for months.

Lt. Allison Goodman would be amazed to see what his great-granddaughter has created on the family homestead. And surely he would be grateful that she inherited such a love of the land and its natural beauty. The longleaf pine and hardwood forests purchased by her grandfather, the ponds created by her father, the flowering forsythia and deutzia planted by her mother are all still here — testament to her appreciation and faithful honoring of a two-hundred year family heritage.

Barbara Sullivan is the author of Garden Perennials for the Coastal South. *Her downtown Wilmington garden has been featured on the PBS show* Garden Smart.

ALMANAC

MAY

"March winds and April showers Bring forth May flowers" — Mother Goose

By Noah Salt

Why We Love May

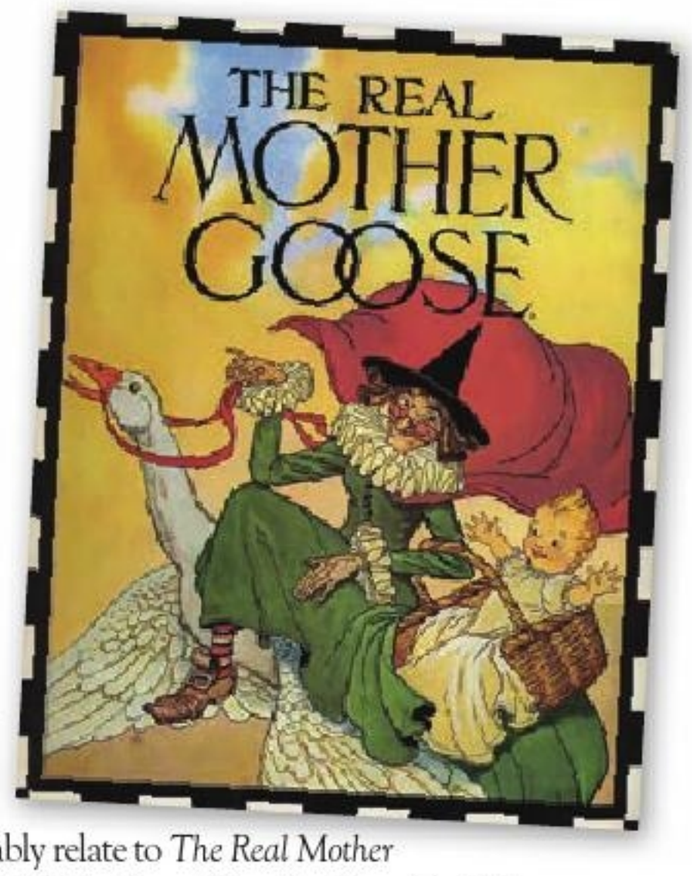
The simple explanation is, of course, Mom. The month of May is rewardingly free of national holidays, except for Memorial Day on May 26, that must be observed lest one feel a little less than patriotic. Instead, we simply and gratefully honor our mothers with a special day dedicated to them, an observance that began in 1908 when West Virginian Anna Jarvis held a memorial for her late mother and subsequently launched a campaign to have the day set aside for honoring mothers everywhere. By 1914 the observance was so widespread, Jarvis complained of its rampant commercialism by florists and greeting-card makers — proof, as Mother Jarvis might have reminded us, that no good deed goes unpunished. Do remember Mama on Sunday, May 11.

By no means is this the extent of May's celebrations, however. The month kicks off with traditional May Day on the 1st, based on an ancient Roman festival celebrating maternity and the rebirth of spring. Fittingly, May 1 is also Mother Goose Day, a day to appreciate the first poems many of us heard on our moms' laps. If you still hear your mother's voice in your head on Saturday, the 10th, don't be so surprised. It is, after all, National Clean Up Your Room Day. Tulip Day arrives on the 13th, followed by Visit Your Relatives Day Sunday, May 18. Might we suggest you arrive with tulips? For what it's worth, May is Be Kind To Animals Week (first week), National Bike and Asparagus Month. So eat your veggies, watch the traffic and be kind to critters everywhere. Mom is always watching.

The Bees Have It

"If bees swarm and leave their hives to establish new colonies in May, they will produce good honey that year. When they do so, you are entitled by custom to follow them over anyone's land and claim them when they come to rest; but only as you "ting-tang" as you go, by beating on some metal utensil — the sound whereof is also said to make your bees stop." — *Tusser's Revivius* 1710

The Real Mother Goose



The true identity of Mother Goose — personified by the archetype of a kindly countrywoman who tells rhymes and tales in verse to children — is as old and obscure, and hotly debated, as any figure in Western literary lore. Mentioned as early as poet Edmund Spenser's *Old Mother Hubbard's Tale* in the early 17th century, references and sources have abounded, including France's *Contes de Ma Mere l'Oye* that included the illustrated tale of "Puss and Boots." According to one historian of early Boston, a woman named Elizabeth who lived in Boston in the 1660s, brought her own six children to a second marriage with a man named Isaac Goose and spent her dotage reciting ditties and singing nursery rhymes to children, which a third husband who worked as a publisher on Pudding Lane, eventually wrote down and published. Most Americans probably relate to *The Real Mother Goose*, a collection of rhymes relating the adventures of Little Bo Peep, Peter the Pumpkin Eater, Mary Quite Contrary and company, lavishly illustrated by artist Blanche Fisher Wright, first published in 1916. According to the book's website, the book has sold more than 3.5 million copies, making it one of the best-selling children's books of all time. All we can say is: *Well, hey diddle diddle.*

Pure Delight

If you've had the good fortune to pay a visit to nurseryman extraordinaire Tony Avent's amazing Juniper Level Botanic Garden and adjacent Plant Delights Nursery, May is your lucky month. Unlike most private nursery operations, Plant Delights — famous across the Northern Hemisphere for its beloved and eccentric catalog of unique and rare plant offerings — opens its doors two times in each season, this year from May 2–4 and May 9–11, 8 a.m.–5 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays, 1–5 p.m. on Sundays. Avent's botanic garden, built on ten acres claimed from a defunct tobacco farm, is simply a wonder to behold, as witty as it is inspiring, offering more than 21,000 different plants. Adjacent Plants Delight Nursery is rightly one of the most admired and innovative nurseries in the nation. If spring gets the verdure in your blood moving, get moving to this treasure of botanical wisdom and beauty right in our own backyard. Don't miss the opportunity to subscribe to their catalog, too. The garden and nursery are located at 9241 Sauls Road in Raleigh, easily reached via U.S. Highways 1 and 70. 919-772-4794. Even more info available at www.plantdelights.com

May 2014

Arts Calendar

Triathalon
5/11

Movie at the Lake
5/25

Memorial Day Observance
5/26

5/1 Shakespeare Club Film

7 p.m. *Richard III* (R, 161 min.) The Bard's tale of a wicked, deformed king and his conquests. Admission: $8. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (910) 632-2285 or thalianhall.org.

5/1 Sculptural Exhibit

9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Whimsical sculptural exhibit by Gary Caldwell features stainless steel trees, flowers and creatures. On display through September 30. Admission: $3–9. Airlie Gardens, 300 Airlie Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-7700 or www.airliegardens.org.

5/1 Slightly Stoopid in Concert

6:30 p.m. Huka Entertainment presents San Diego band Slightly Stoopid (rock fusion). Admission: $25–30. Greenfield Lake Amphitheater, 1941 Amphitheater Drive, Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (251) 300-3150 or greenfieldlakeamphitheater.com.

5/1 Progressive Wine Dinner

6:30–9:30 p.m. Kick off the Wilmington Wine & Food Festival with four wine and food pairings at four historic homes. Proceeds benefit the Bellamy Mansion Museum. Bellamy Mansion, 503 Market Street, Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (910) 251-3700 or wilmingtonwineandfood.com.

5/1–3 Surfalorus Film Festival

Annual film festival screens the hottest new surf films, action flicks and documentaries about coastal issues; includes live music and free board expo and shaper show. Various locations in Carolina Beach, Wrightsville Beach and Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-5995 or www.surfalorus.com.

5/1–4 Waterman Ocean Festival

7:30 a.m. Celebration of fifty years of Wrightsville Beach surfing features the Longboard Classic Pro-Am and SUP Ocean Race, special guest stars, history surf lessons for kids, awards ceremony and unveiling of the Waterman Hall of Fame first class inductees. Holiday Inn Resort, 1706 North Lumina Avenue, Wrightsville Beach. Info: wblasurf.org.

5/1–4 Independent Film Festival

Films and shorts by local filmmakers screened at venues throughout the Port City. New awards include "Best Female Director" and the "Filmington Award." Admission: $8–15. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington & Browncoat Theatre, 111 Grace Street, Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (910) 742-0012 or www.cfifn.org/2014-film-festival.

5/2 Heartbeat of Soul in Concert

6–8 p.m. Heartbeat of Soul kicks off the summer concert series at Airlie Gardens. Bring chairs and blankets; food and wine available for purchase. Admission: $3–9. Airlie Gardens, 300 Airlie Road, Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (910) 798-7700 or airliegardens.org.

5/2 Bluegrass Concert

8 p.m. Bluegrass and Old Time music show presented by Step Right Up Productions featuring End of the Line, Stray Locals, The South Hammock Bluegrass Band and Big Al Hall with Possum Creek. Admission: $5. Proceeds benefit. Brooklyn Arts Center, 516 North Fourth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 616-9882 or www.brooklynartsnc.com.

5/2 Ladies of the Cape Fear

6:30–9:30 p.m. Twelve women from the Cape Fear area, nominated for their significant impact on the community, will be honored with a portrait unveiling by Kenny Barnes Studio. Hosted by Frances Weller, the event will include a cocktail reception and exhibit. Admission: $45. Portion of proceeds benefits Women of Hope. Terraces on Sir Tyler, 1826 Sir Tyler Drive, Wilmington. Info/Tickets: www.eventbrite.com.

5/2–3 Pender County Spring Fest

6–10 p.m. (Friday); 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. (Saturday). Homegrown, handmade festival featuring food, music, arts and crafts, children's activities and all-day entertainment from area vendors, churches and nonprofits. Pender County Courthouse Square, West Courthouse Avenue, Burgaw. Info: (910) 259-4844 or www.visitpender.com/calendarofevents.

5/2–4 Musical Theatre

8 p.m. *Assassins*. Revue-style musical by Stephen Sondheim and John Weidman examines the motivations of the men and women who killed or attempted to kill United States presidents. Admission: $16–20. City Stage, 21 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 264-2602 or www.citystagenc.com.

5/2–4 Wine & Food Festival

7–11 p.m. (Friday); 2–5 p.m. (Saturday); 1–4 p.m. (Sunday). Epicurean festival hosted by Bellamy Mansion and Wilmington Wine with samplings of more than 200 wines and beers as well as scrumptious bites from the best locally owned restaurants, caterers and food trucks. Admission: $80/3-Day Pass; $35/Cocktail Party (Friday); $45/Grand Tasting (Saturday); $10/Street Eats (Sunday). Proceeds benefit the Open Gate Domestic Violence Shelter and Bellamy Mansion. Bellamy Mansion, 503 Market Street, Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (910) 251-3700 or www.wilmingtonwineandfood.com.

5/2–18 Designer Showhouse

11 a.m. – 6 p.m. (Thursday-Sunday). Local designers will transform interior and exterior spaces for the first Arts Council Designer Showhouse hosted by HGTV's Meg Caswell. Admission: $20–25. Designer Showhouse, 1909 Gillette Drive, Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (910) 343-0998 or www.artscouncilofwilmington.org.

5/2–31 Dinner Theater

7 p.m. *Caddyshack*. Interactive murder mystery show includes heartfelt Goth jokes, easy laughs and three-course meal. Admission: $20–32. TheatreNOW, 19 South Tenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3669 or www.theatrewilmington.com.

5/3 Derby4Dogs

4–7 p.m. Charity event, hosted by Paws4People to raise awareness and funds for the training of assistance dogs. Event includes cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, a silent auction and coverage of the Kentucky Derby. Admission: $65. City Club of Wilmington, 23 South Second Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 431-0698 or www.paws4people.org.

5/3 Grand Opening

2–5 p.m. Grand opening of the Coastal Education Center features tours, kids' activities, the Plastic Ocean Project's mobile art exhibit and light refreshments. Coastal Education Center, 530 Causeway Drive, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 509-2838 or www.nccoast.org.

5/3 Gypsy Swing Band

5:30 p.m. (dinner); 8:30 p.m. (show). Vancouver's legendary folk cabaret band Maria in the Shower takes the stage for a special event benefiting Thalian Hall Center for the Performing Arts, Inc. Admission: $150/dinner and show; $35/show only. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Tickets/Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

5/3 Safari Hunt

9 a.m. Underwater scavenger hunt through a shipwreck with $4,000 in prizes and a cookout to follow. Admission: $20–25. Liberty Ship Marina, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 392-4386 or www.aquaticsafaris.com/safari-hunt.

5/3 Dinner with the Stars

6–9 p.m. Charity dinner and raffle sponsored by the Wilmington Police Recreation Association featuring appearances by eighteen local celebrities. Admission: $75. Proceeds benefit scholarships for Cape Fear Community College students. Cape Fear Community College, 502 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0140 or www.wilmingtonpoliceofficers.org.

5/3 YWCA Gala

6–10 p.m. Centennial gala celebrates the YWCA's rich history and recognizes the accomplishments of distinguished women of the Cape Fear. Event features dinner, dancing and live entertainment by the Four Knights Band. Guest speakers include Dr. Richardson-Heron and retired Colonel Hodges. Admission: $100. Proceeds establish endowment to secure the future of the Lower Cape Fear YWCA. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (910) 799-6820 or www.ywca-lowercapefear.org.

5/3 Art Auction

7–9 p.m. Cape Fear Center for Inquiry's "Great ArtSpectations" includes silent and live auctions featuring the works of 500 artists. Admission: $25. Coastline Events Center, 503 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (910) 362-0048 or cfci.net.

5/3 Work on Wilmington

8 a.m. – 12 p.m. Hundreds of volunteers connect with non-profit organizations across the region to beautify, build and better the community. Various locations in Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-2611 or www.workonwilmington.org.

5/3 Cyclists Goin' Coastal

8 a.m. Join cyclists from all over the east coast for a scenic ride through eastern North Carolina and learn about the conservation efforts of the Coastal Land Trust. Registration includes lunch and admission to an after party featuring a cookout and live music by Triplewide. Admission: $10–75. Proceeds benefit the NC Coastal Land Trust's conservation efforts. River Dunes, 465 East Harborside Road, Oriental. Info: (910) 790-4524 or www.coastallandtrust.org/goincoastal.

5/3 River to Sea Bike Ride

8:30 a.m. Twenty-mile casual-paced bicycle ride from downtown Wilmington to Wrightsville Beach on Wilmington's River to Sea Bikeway. Refreshments and shuttle provided afterward. 12 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: www.rivertoseabikeway.com.

5/3 Bird Program

9:15–10:30 a.m. Cape Fear River Watch first Saturday seminar with Carson Wood and James Abbott from Coastal Plain Conservation Group. Learn about the bird species inhabiting the Cape Fear River. Admission: Free. Wild Bird and Garden, 3501 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-6001 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

5/3 Great Strides 5k

9 a.m. National family-oriented 5k/fundraiser for the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation featuring children's activities, food and festivities. Admission: $35. Mayfaire Town Center, Trysports Field, 6835 Main Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 664-0145 or fightcf.cff.org.

5/3–4 Parade of Homes

12–5 p.m. (Saturday & Sunday). Wilmington-Cape Fear Home Builders Association Showcases the craftsmanship, diversity and quality of the region's premier homes boasting the latest trends, materials and technology in the industry. Info: (910) 799-2611 or wilmingtonparadeofhomes.com.

5/3–4 Kentucky Derby Party

Televised race coverage, horse shoes, cornhole, food, mint juleps, big hats and garden party attire. Admission: $50. Proceeds benefit Poplar Grove Plantation's school programs and raise awareness for the Southeast Coast Region Equine Rescue League. Poplar Grove Plantation, 10200 Highway 17 North, Wilmington. Info: (910) 686-9518 or www.poplargrove.org.

5/4 Guided Walking Tour

11:30 a.m. – 2 p.m. Guided history, horticulture and ecology tour through Airlie Gardens. Admission: $3–9, included with regular admission. Airlie Gardens, 300 Airlie Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-7700 or airliegardens.org.

5/4 Sports Hall of Fame Banquet

5 p.m. Reception and silent auction followed by Sports Hall of Fame induction ceremony and dinner. This year's inductees include Calvin Lane, Ricky Benton, Bob Boyd and Alge Crumpler. UNCW Burney Center, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 795-1224 or www.gwshof.com.

5/7–10 Comedy Festival

Four-day independently run live comedy festival featuring stand-up, sketch and improv performances by comedians from all over the U.S. and Canada. Admission: $15–25, prices vary per event. Various location in Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (910) 520-5520 or www.capefearcomedyfestival.com.

5/8 Canine Fashion Show

6–8 p.m. Fashion show to raise awareness for the NC puppy mill problem. Event features twenty-five couture-dressed rescue pups and their owners, music, giveaways and awards for animal activists. Admission: one bag of dog food for The Karma Foundation. Unleashed, Landfall Shopping Center, 1319 Military Cutoff Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-9270.

5/8 Jazz at the Mansion

6:30–8:30 p.m. El Jaye Johnson and the Port City All Stars kick off the "Jazz at the Mansion" concert series on the Bellamy Mansion lawn. Bring chairs; beer and wine cash bar available. Admission: $5–12. Bellamy Mansion, 503 Market Street, Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (910) 251-3700 or www.bellamymansion.org.

5/9 Disabled Fishing Tournament

7:30 a.m. – 12 p.m. Got-Em-On Live Bait Club provides a day of fishing, food and fun for those with disabilities. Awards ceremony follows. Admission: Free. Kure Beach Fishing Pier, 100 Atlantic Avenue, Kure Beach. Info: (910) 367-9015 or www.got-em-on.com.

5/10 Bird Program

9:15–10:30 a.m. Educational bird program with Carson Wood and James Abbott from Coastal Plain Conservation Group. Learn about painted buntings and how to attract them to your yard. Admission: Free. Wild Bird and Garden, 3501 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-6001 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

5/10 Spring Fling at the Lakes

11 a.m. – 4 p.m. Community fun day featuring vendors, food, games, inflatable rides, kayak races, live entertainment, wing cook-off and a car show. Admission: Free. Spring Lake Park, Pine Road, Boiling Spring Lakes. Info: (910) 845-2040 or www.cityofbsl.org.

5/10 Confederate Memorial Service

9 a.m. Memorial service hosted by the United Daughters of the Confederacy to honor the sacrifice of confederate defenders of Fort Fisher. Admission: Free. Fort Fisher State Historic Site, 1610 Fort Fisher Boulevard South, Kure Beach. Info: (910) 458-5538 or www.nchistoricsites.org/fisher.

5/10 Jeanne Robertson Live

8 p.m. Hilarious comedian and former Miss North Carolina brings Southern charm, wit and exceptional comedy to the stage. Admission: $18–35. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

5/11 Double Sprint Triathlon

7 a.m. Formula 1 triathlon featuring a 750-meter swim in the Atlantic, a 3-mile run on the beach, and 20-kilometer bike ride. Spectators welcome. Admission: $70–85. Carolina Beach. Info: www.setupevents.com.

5/12 Book Talk

7 p.m. Ben Steelman of *Star News* speaks with former *Star News* staffer and bestselling author Kevin Maurer about his nonfiction books (*Hunting Che* and *No Hero*). WHQR Gallery, 254 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-1640 or www.whqr.org.

5/14 Fitz & The Tantrums in Concert

6 p.m. This L.A.-based indie soul band brings its chart-topping, show-stopping modern pop to the stage. Admission: $25–31. Greenfield Lake Amphitheater, 1941 Amphitheater Drive, Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (910) 341-7855 or www.progressiveshows.com.

5/14 Bird Walk

8–9:30 a.m. Walk through various habitats in Airlie Gardens with Wild Bird and Garden's Jill Peleuses and Airlie Gardens' environmental educator, Matt Collogan. Free with admission. Free pass available at Wild Bird and Garden. Airlie Gardens, 300 Airlie Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-6001 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

5/15 Author Reading

7 p.m. Wilmington debut of Taylor Brown's story collection, *In the Season of Blood and Gold*. Bourgie Nights, 123 Princess Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 763-5252 or www.facebook.com/bourgienights.

5/15 Artist Lecture

6:30–7:30 p.m. Catherine Bishir discusses African-American artisans in North Carolina. Bellamy Mansion, 503 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-3700 or www.bellamymansion.org.

5/15–18 Live Theater

8 p.m. (Tuesday–Saturday); 3 p.m. (Sunday). *Wonderful Town*. Classic musical from the Golden Age on Broadway following two sisters' misadventures and pursuits of success and romance; accompanied by one of Leonard Bernstein's most memorable scores. Admission: $15–30. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

5/15–18 Live Theater

Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson. A mix of historical fact and invention using the story of America's controversial seventh president to investigate the attractions and terrors of American populism with a blend of outrageous comedy, anarchic theatricality and infectious emo rock. City Stage, 21 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 264-2602 or citystagenc.com

5/16 Kayak/SUP Yoga Workshop

7–8:30 p.m. Instructors explore the health benefits of SUP, paddling and pedaling kayaks, as well as fishing from a kayak or SUP. Admission: Free. Wrightsville Beach Town Park, 321 Causeway Drive, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-7925 or www.towb.org.

5/16 Jack Jack 180 in Concert

6–8 p.m. Banker, teacher, lawyer and salesman roll up their sleeves to create a high-energy blend of rock, pop and dance for Airlie Gardens' summer concert series. Bring chairs and blankets; food and wine available for purchase. Admission: $3–9. Airlie Gardens, 300 Airlie Road, Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (910) 798-7700 or airliegardens.org.

5/16 Appreciation BBQ

5:30–7:30 p.m. Live music and all-you-can eat BBQ at a Riverfront celebration to thank local elected officials for their dedicated service. Admission: $25. Wilmington Chamber of

Commerce, One Estell Lee Place, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-2611 or www.wilmingtonchamber.org.

5/16–18 Greek Festival

11 a.m. – 10 p.m. (Friday & Saturday); 11 a.m. – 7 p.m. (Sunday). Fstival celebrating the culture, faith and heritage of the Greek community with authentic food, music, dancing, church tour, cultural presentations, souvenirs, cooking demonstrations and a Greek-style marketplace. Proceeds benefit St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and other local charities. St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church, 608 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 392-4444 or www.stnicholasgreekfest.com.

5/17 Oakdale Cemetery Tour

10a.m. – 12 p.m. Historical walking tour of North Carolina's oldest rural cemetery led by Robin Triplett. Admission: $10. Oakdale Cemetery, 520 North Fifteenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-5682 or www.oakdalecemetery.org.

5/17 Hope Gala

6–11:30 p.m. Annual fundraiser/celebration for the Junior Diabetes Foundation features cocktail reception, guest speakers, silent and live auctions, dinner, entertainment and dancing. This year's honorees are Scott and Twyla Satterfield. Admission: $200. Wilmington Convention Center, 515 Nutt Street, Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (910) 509-9899 or jdrfhopegala.org.

5/17 Battleship Program

1–4 p.m. Showboat: Systems and Design. One-hour presentation by Lt. Col. Ken Rittenmeyer followed by a two-hour shipboard exploration. Admission: $35–40. Battleship NC, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5797 or www.battleshipnc.com.

5/17 Primus in Concert

7 p.m. Alternative 90s rockers take the stage with their original lineup of singer/bassist Les Claypool, guitarist Larry LaLonde and drummer Tim Alexander. Admission: $40–45. Greenfield Lake Amphitheater, 1941 Amphitheater Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 332-0983 or greenfieldlakeamphitheater.com.

5/17 Street Arts Festival

10 a.m. – 6 p.m. Interactive arts festival at Carolina Beach celebrates visual, culinary and performing arts with vendor shops, interactive demonstrations, educational programs, community art projects, food and live entertainment. Admission: Free. Cape Fear Boulevard, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 909-7643 or www.facebook.com/carolinabeachstreetartfestival.

5/18 The Mako Band in Concert

5–8 p.m. The Mako Band kicks off Kure Beach's "Boogie in the Park" summer concert series with '70s, '80s and '90s beach, boogie and blues. Bring blankets, chairs and snacks. Admission: Free. Ocean Front Park, 105 Atlantic Avenue, Kure Beach. Info: (910) 458-8216 or www.townofkurebeach.org.

5/18 Birding Cruise

12–2:30 p.m. Narrated sight-seeing cruise with a birding expert to showcase the different species of birds found in the lower Cape Fear. Admission: $20–40. Wilmington Water Tours, 212 South Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910 338-3134 or wilmingtonwatertours.net.

5/18 Music at First Concert

5 p.m. "Two for One." Domonique Launey and John Tabler perform a duo on piano specifically written for one piano and four hands. Music presented will include compositions by Brahms, Debussy and Dvorak. Admission: Free. Donations accepted. First Presbyterian Church, 125 South Third Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-6688 or www.firstonthird.org.

5/18 Spring Concert

4 p.m. Wilmington Choral Society presents "Viva Vivaldi" featuring Antonia Vivaldi's "Gloria", "In Memoria Aeterna" and other period pieces. Guest soloists include Nancy King (soprano), Shelia Bron (alto) and Whitney Lanier (soprano) with Chorus and Chamber Orchestra conducted by Paula Brinkman. Admission: $10. Non-perishable food donations for Mother Hubbard's Cupboard requested. UNCW Kenan Auditorium, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (800) 732-3643 or wilmingtonchoralsociety.com.

5/21 Birding Kayak Tour

4–7:30 p.m. Kayak and bird watching tour of the Fort Fisher Basin area with Wild Bird and Garden and Mananaim Adventures. Reservations required. Admission: $45 including equipment and guide. Wild Bird and Garden, 3501 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-6001 or www.wildbirdgardeninc.com.

5/22 Civil Rights Lecture

6:30 p.m. From Civil War to Civil Rights. Discussion of the West African culture with UNCW's Dr. Nana Amponsah. Poplar Grove Plantation, 10200 US Highway 17 North, Wilmington. Info: (910) 686-9518 or www.poplargrove.org.

5/23 Gallery Walk

6–9 p.m. Self-guided tour through downtown Wilmington galleries and studios showcasing local art through opening receptions, demonstrations, artist discussions and exhibitions. Admission: Free. Various venues, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-0998 or www.wilmingtonfourthfridays.com.

5/23 Downtown Sundown Concert

6–10 p.m. Satisfaction kicks off the "Downtown Sundown" summer concert series with a Rolling Stones tribute along the Cape Fear River. Food, wine and beer available for purchase. Admission: Free. Riverfront Park, North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 763-7349 or www.downtowndundown.com.

5/23 Amusement Park Opening

5–11 p.m. Join the town of Carolina Beach for the seasonal opening of its seaside amusement park. Enjoy food, games, carnival rides, live music and family-friendly entertainment. Open every evening through Labor Day. Admission: $10–30. Carolina Beach Boardwalk, 100 Cape Fear Boulevard, Carolina Beach. Info: (813) 760-7678 or www.pleasureislandnc.org/events.

5/23–25 Shakespeare on the Green

8 p.m. *As You Like It* (directed by Cherri McKay). Admission: Free. Greenfield Lake Amphitheater, 1941 Amphitheater Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399.2878 or greenfieldlakeamphitheater.com/shakespeare.

5/24 Bird Program

9 a.m. – 12 p.m. The Cape Fear Audubon Society presents The Wonder of Birds, a free interactive learning program for adults and children including hands-on learning centers, coffee with the birds, bluebird box nesting and a special guest appearance from Eva the Red-tail Hawk from Skywatch Bird Rescue. Admission: Free. Halyburton Park, 4099 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or halyburtonpark.com.

5/24–25 Orange Street ArtsFest

10 a.m. – 6 p.m. (Saturday); 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. (Sunday). Downtown arts festival showcasing a variety of local art and artists with exhibitors, art show and sale, pottery demonstrations, food vendors and live entertainment. Admission: Free. Second and Orange Streets, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-1788 or www.wilmingtoncommunityarts.org.

5/25 Jah Creation in Concert

5–8 p.m. Reggae band Jah Creation brings their upbeat music, irie vibes and message of love, respect and unity to Kure Beach's "Boogie in the Park" summer concert series. Admission: Free.

Thalian Hall
CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS, INC
2013-2014 MAIN ATTRACTIONS AND SPECIAL EVENTS
Maria in the Shower
MAY 3 AT 8:30PM
LEGENDARY GYPSY SWING BAND
Jeanne ROBERTSON
Former Miss North Carolina
MAY 10 AT 8PM
SOUTHERN CLASS. EXCEPTIONAL COMEDY.
Tickets: 910.632.2285 · 800.523.2820 · www.ThalianHall.org · 310 Chestnut St · Wilmington, NC 28401

Ocean Front Park, 105 Atlantic Avenue, Kure Beach. Info: (910) 458-8216 or www.townofkurebeach.org.

5/25 Movie at the Lake

8:45 p.m. *Frozen* (2013, PG, 102 min). Bring blankets and chairs and enjoy a family-friendly outdoor movie screening by the lake at Carolina Beach. Popcorn, soda and candy available for purchase. Admission: Free. Carolina Beach Lake Park, Atlanta Avenue, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 458-8434 or www.pleasureislandnc.org.

5/26 Memorial Day Observance

5:45 p.m. Observance held to remember those who gave their lives in service. Features military musical arrangements by an Armed Forces Band, 21-gun salute, and the Executive Director of the Battleship NC, Captain Terry A. Bragg. Admission: Free. Battleship NC, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5797 or www.battleshipnc.com.

5/28–31 Blue Marlin Tournament

6–10 p.m. (Wednesday); 8:30 a.m. – 8 p.m. (Thursday & Friday); 8:30 a.m. – 10 p.m. (Saturday). Annual fishing tournament featuring three days of fishing, an opening captain's party, mid-tournament party at the gazebo, and closing awards ceremony with food, live music and open bar. Part of the North Carolina Governor's Cup Billfishing Conservation Series. Proceeds benefit. Wrightsville Beach Marina & Yacht Club, 6 Marina Street, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 262-5566 or www.capefearbluemarlintournament.com.

5/29 Live Theater

7:30 p.m. *Yanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike*. Wilmington premiere of the award-winning Christopher Durang comedy featuring a deconstruction of Chekhovian themes with hilarious results. Runs through June 21. Red Barn Studio, 1122 South Third Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 782-2262 or www.thalian.org.

5/30 Downtown Sundown Concert

6–10 p.m. UV (U2 tribute band) takes the stage for the "Downtown Sundown" summer concert series. Food, wine and beer available for purchase. Admission: Free. Riverfront Park, North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 763-7349 or www.downtowndundown.com.

5/30 Variety Show

7–10 p.m. Bring a chair or blanket and enjoy a free seaside variety show featuring Wilmington Big Band. Admission: Free. Ocean Front Park, 105 Atlantic Avenue, Kure Beach. Info: (910) 458-8216 or www.pleasure-island.org/events.

5/30–31 Summer Plant Sale

9 a.m. – 6 p.m. (Friday and Saturday). Annual plant sale featuring plants grown by members of the Hobby Greenhouse Club. Admission: Free. A portion of proceeds benefit scholarships for area community college horticulture students. Forest Hills Hobby Greenhouse, 2318 Metts Avenue, Wilmington. Info: www.hobbygreenhouseclub.org.

5/30–31 Shakespeare on the Green

8 p.m. *As You Like It* (directed by Cherri McKay). Admission: Free. Greenfield Lake Amphitheater, 1941 Amphitheater Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399.2878 or greenfieldlakeamphitheater.com/shakespeare.

5/31 Battleship Alive

8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Watch and interact with World War II living history interpreters as they re-enact the daily duties and drills on board the ship. Admission: $6–12. Battleship NC, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5797 or www.battleshipnc.com.

WEEKLY HAPPENINGS

Monday Wrightsville Farmers' Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Locally grown produce, baked goods and unique crafts. Open through October 4. Admission: Free. Seawater Lane, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-7925 or www.townofwrightsvillebeach.com.

Monday Turtle Talks

7–8 p.m. Learn about sea turtles with the Pleasure Island Sea Turtle Project. Program runs through August 25. Admission: Free. Ocean Front Park, 105 Atlantic Avenue, Kure Beach. Info: (910) 458-8216 or www.townofkurebeach.org.

Monday–Wednesday Cinematique Films

7:00 p.m. A series of independent, classic, foreign and notable films screened in historic Thalian Hall. Check online for updated listings and special screenings. Co-sponsored by WHQR and Thalian Hall Center for the Performing Arts, Inc. Admission: $7. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info/Tickets: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

Tuesday Cape Fear Blues Jam

8 p.m. A unique gathering of the area's finest Blues musicians. Bring your instrument and join the fun. No cover charge. The Rusty Nail, 1310 South Fifth Avenue. Info: (910) 251-1888 or www.capefearblues.org.

Tuesday Wine Tasting

6–8 p.m. Free wine tasting hosted by a wine professional plus wine and small plate specials all night. Admission: Free. The Fortunate Glass, 29 South Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-4292 or www.fortunateglasswinebar.com.

Wednesday Poplar Grove Farmers' Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Open-air market held on the front lawn of the historic Poplar Grove Plantation. Fresh produce, landscaping and bedding plants, herbs, baked goods, and handmade art and craft items. Open through November 26. Admission: Free. Poplar Grove Plantation, 10200 U.S. Highway 17 North, Wilmington. Info: (910) 686-9518 or www.poplargrove.com.

Wednesday T'ai Chi at CAM

12–1 p.m. Qigong (Practicing the Breath of Life) with Martha Gregory. Open to beginner and experienced participants. Members: $5. Non-members: $8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Wednesday Wine Pairing

5–6:30 p.m. Come in for a Sweet 'n Savory wine pairing and learn about a specific style of wine every week as well as which foods best bring out its flavor. All bottles of wine are $5 off. Sweet 'n Savory Cafe, 1611 Pavilion Place, Wilmington. Info: (910) 256-0115 or www.sweetnsavorycafe.com.

Wednesday Beer Tasting

5–6:30 p.m. For this week's special, visit Sweet n Savory Pub on Facebook. Admission: Free. Sweet 'n Savory Pub, 2012 Eastwood Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 679-8101 or www.thepubatsweetnsavory.com.

Wednesday ComedyNOW

8 p.m. Local, regional and national acts, open mics, standup, films and more. Bar and kitchen open. Tickets: $3. TheatreNOW, 19 South Tenth Street, Wilmington. Info:

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CALENDAR

(910) 399-3669 or www.theatrewilmington.com.

Thursday & Friday — Yoga at CAM

12–1 p.m. (Thursday); 5:30–6:30 p.m. (Friday). A soothing retreat open to beginner and experienced participants. Members: $5. Non-members: $8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Thursday & Sunday — CAM Public Tours

7:30 p.m. (Thursday); 2 p.m. (Sunday). Explore the newest exhibits at Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Friday — Music on the Town

6–9 p.m. Free summer concert series hosted by Mayfaire Town Center on the event lawn every Friday through July. May 2: Southern Trouble (modern country & southern rock); May 9: Steady Eddies (classic rock); May 16: Cosmic Groove Lizards (original rock); May 23: Jam Sanwich (southern classic rock). Admission: Free. Mayfaire Town Center, 6835 Main Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 256-5131 or www.mayfairetown.com.

Friday & Saturday — Sampling

6–8 p.m. (Friday); 12–5 p.m. (Saturday). Sample unique boutique wines as well as extra virgin olive oils and vinegars before you buy. Admission: Free. Taste the Olive, The Forum, 1125 Military Cutoff Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 256-6457 or www.tastetheolive.com.

Saturday — Riverfront Farmers' Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Curbside market featuring local farmers, producers, artists, crafters and live music along the banks of the Cape Fear River. Products include fresh produce, herbs, flowers, meats, baked goods, canned items, wine, art and more. Open through November 22. Admission: Free. Riverfront Park, North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-6223 or www.wilmingtondowntown.com.

Saturday — Carolina Beach Farmers' Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Outdoor "island style" market featuring live music and local growers, producers and artisans selling fresh local produce, wines, meats, baked goods, herbal products and handmade crafts. Open through October 4. Admission: Free. Carolina Beach Lake Park, Highway 421 and Atlanta Avenue, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 431-8122 or www.carolinabeachfarmersmarket.com.

Saturday — Super Saturday Fun Time

3 p.m. Live theater and variety show. Tickets: $8. TheatreNOW, 19 South Tenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3669 or www.theatrewilmington.com.

Sunday — Bluewater Waterfront Music

4–7 p.m. Summer music series on the waterfront patio every Sunday through October. May 4: Heart & Soul (classic rock & beach); May 11: Lunar Tide (classic rock & modern); May 18: Overtyme (classic rock & beach); May 25: Back of the Boat Tour (yacht rock). Admission: Free. Bluewater Waterfront Grill, 4 Marina Street, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-8500 or www.bluewaterdining.com.

To add a calendar event, please contact Ashley at ashley@saltmagazinenc.com. Events must be submitted the first of the month, one month prior to the event.

Port City People

Lower Cape Fear Hospice
Festival of Flowers
Wednesday, February 26, 2014

Photographs by Ariel Keener

Lisa Clark, Rhonda Grice

Tara Guerard, Jean Rosenberg, Matthew Robbins

Courtney Arnold of Stellar Events, Tracey Kellogg

Mary Whitehurst, Jill Raspet, Gwen Whitley

Sandy Graham, Doris Coy

Schaum Hunt and Deane Heenan

Elizabeth Smith, Suzanne Moyers, Cindy Schram, Laurie Bystrom

Neil Rose, Joanne Findt

Suzanne Morrison, Jane Birnbach, Tessa Young, Ashley Wahl

Joy and Jane Grady

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Port City People

50th Gala of the Blockade Runner

Saturday, March 29, 2014

Photographs by Joshua Curry

Frank Block, Janice Kingoff

Mary Martin Baggett, Ms. Dennis, Dorothy Baggett

Jonathan Barfield

Bob and Faye Etheridge

William Baggett, Ms. Dennis

Beatles, Ana and Sam Martin

Port City People

Power of the Purse

Thursday, March 20, 2014

Photographs by Ariel Keener

Denise Szaloky, Joy Grady

Noel Hanselmann, Rebecca Holliday, Cinday Taro, Stephanie Taylor, Jill Boesel, Kayla Williams

Carla Turner, Panza McNeill

Sandy Graham, Carol Drury

Jamie Thompson, Brianne Winterton, Camber Caldwell

Dana O'Donovan, Sarah Buzzard

Port City People

33rd Annual Cape Fear Chapter Red Cross Gala and Auction

Saturday, March 15, 2014

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Max and Lynn Allen, Denise Battles, Michael Mills

Miranda Lewandoski, Barbara Thomas, Meghan Bryan, Natawsha Vondrak, Casey Solis

Jonathan and Jennifer Weiss

Bradley and Julie Coxe

Lisa and Lt. Cmdr. Benjamin Golightly

Dr. Susanne Adams and Tom Adams

Doug and Margi Erickson

Reid and Gwyn Hardy

Heather and Jason Dillon

Commander Jeff Randall and Linda Randall

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Port City People

The 18th Annual Foundation Gala

Country Club of Landfall

Saturday, March 29, 2014

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Melissa Ellison, Jessica Spencer, Carl Roark, Tammy Darazsdi

Bill Hamlet, Pia Ann Robison

Martha and Jack Erdody

John Spencer, Dr. Barry Amos, Dr. Adam Brown

Cheryl and Paul Covin

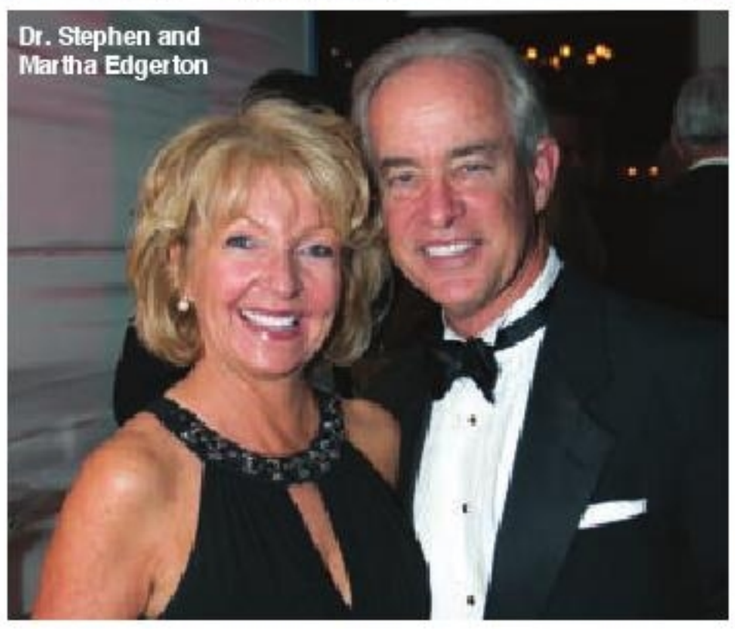
Dr. Adam Brown,
Carey Disney Ricks

Dr. Nicole and Fernando Aristy

Annette and Tom Clifford

Ashley Miller, Bo Dean, Michael Freeze

Kelly and Mark Tinsley



Dr. Stephen and
Martha Edgerton

Ginny Tindall, Larry Nelson

May Day, Y'all

By Astrid Stellanova

Maybe you like the month of May. Maybe May makes you want to holler "MAY DAY," like I do whenever I see my loopy cousin Mae Ella Mason and her bunch of ill-mannered young 'uns drive up in her banged-up Suburban. You'll probably love this month if you happen to like sunshine, daisies and duckies. Tell you the truth: Too much pretty hurts my eyes.

Taurus (April 20–May 20)

The first week of May is intense, Honey, cause with Mercury in your sign you are feeling full of yourself. Twist and shout, and work it on out, like you are Chuck Berry's long-lost love child. After the 7th, finances come into play and all I'm saying is tuck the plastic away. You're good with money but curb the impulse 'cause you won't want something small. You'll buy big – say, a shiny new Harley. If you can't stop yourself, do not use credit. And if you cannot pay cash, Honey, wear chaps and don't get a rash, or you'll pay for that Harley twice. Trust me: You will look good on the back of a Hog and you were born to wear pleather.

Gemini (May 21–June 20)

Almost all month you are affected by a transit in your eleventh house. You're not your old self – you're better than that. It's like you have the mind of Walt Disney and the bank account of Bill Gates. Things are creative, you got your twin mojo working, the whole package. Get on down tonight, Sugar, because this month you will be tiger fast in getting what you want and nobody can stop you. Somebody's going to have to hold Big Mama and Big Papa back.

Cancer (June 21–July 22)

This is a good month for your career. If you've got one, it takes off. If you're looking for one, you find it. You may have an itty-bitty skeleton in your closet that needs to get taken care off – clean up that old mess, Sugar. You know what I mean. The full moon on the 14th is a strong signal to pay attention. Take care of business; read your mail, and don't sit around like an unaddressed envelope. Then, take the trip that you get offered.

Leo (July 23–August 22)

It's a short distance between the states of cocky and confident. Some of your friends and associates are measuring, and notice you have a foot in both states. Privately, you believe you're ready to let loose on *America's Got Talent*. Uh, not yet. You like a risk, but Honey, wait till the 28th. There will be a new moon in Gemini, and that moon brings nothing but good times. In the meantime, you do get on someone's last nerve. Make up; say you're sorry. It's worth the trouble.

Virgo (August 23 –September 22)

Just wear your big boy or big girl pants. It's that easy, peasy. I see you closing a chapter in your life and moving on if you take a little chance. It's a heavy door to close, but it's time. If you do this, there's a new opportunity that can swing wide open on the other side. Mars is in a beneficial position this month, and it means go for that job, or promotion. Don't hang back like a blue-haired granny plowing along in the passing lane.

Libra (September 23–October 22)

Breathe through your nose just like you're about to have a baby. You are about to give birth to something new in your own self, Child. It may feel a little like pushing a piano through a manhole with one finger, but if you do this right, a whole new dimension opens up. Mars is in your sign on the 19th. When this is all over, a new side of you is going to surface and you will experience more fun than two rednecks at a Motel 6 with a bag of quarters and a Magic Fingers vibrating bed.

Scorpio (October 23–November 21)

If that loudmouth *Millionaire Matchmaker* ever met you, she'd know to zip it up. There's a lot of possibility for romance in your stars this month, and anything could happen. But you will definitely either get married, or get more involved if you already are, Sugar. If I didn't know better, I'd say you might even elope and surprise your own self. Your psychic experiences are gonna be unusual this month too.

Sagittarius (November 22–December 21)

This month Sagittarius is simply irresistible, and you'll be living in a David Bowie daydream. You'll be appealing to everybody – men, women, even mean children. Charm is not just something hanging on your bracelet, and you will have it to spare. Romance is center stage in your life, and you won't have to seek it; it will find you. Throw a little of that excess passion into work, and don't let the month end before you do.

Capricorn (December 22–January 19)

Don't let anybody put the cap on you, Capricorn. Be leery of Debbie and Dan Downer. Some people bring a beam of light as they go down life's path, and some only when they go away. There will be a good bit of envy aimed your way, because anything you need to shed – excess baggage, old boyfriends, bad debt – looks easy for you now. You're going to attract nearly everything but men and money this month, so use the good sense your mama gave you.

Aquarius (January 20–February 18)

OK, let the sun shine in on you, just like the hippies said it would. Let go and let your good karma work. You're naturally complicated, and your life can easily become a goat rodeo if you over-think everything, Sugar. Mercury transits your sign most of this month, and so the homefront is going to be whatever you want. It's a good time to tackle a home project, or buy a house. It's also a good time to buy into a new relationship. It's just a good time to be you all month long.

Pisces (February 19–March 20)

You go on a fishing expedition, so to speak, and come back home with a mess of crappies and bunch of good stories to tell. To quote a friend's daddy, them fish are gonna be jumping up your pant's leg – and all you got to do is bait the hook. It's that kinda star time. On the 14th, there's a full moon in Taurus, which is worth noting. On the 19th, any hiccups that caused trouble will end.

Aries (March 21–April 19)

Still love Mother Nature despite what She did to you? Well, this month you actually find a good reason for the good will you usually feel toward yourself. (Read: easy for Aries to be conceited. Just saying.) Honestly, about the time when you seem spectacularly self-centered, you manage to do something spectacularly generous. This is one of those times, and your generosity may even surprise you.

For years, Astrid Stellanova owned and operated Curl Up and Dye Beauty Salon in the boondocks of North Carolina until arthritic fingers and her popular astrological readings provoked a new career path.

A Novel Idea

The best ideas are always just out your front door

By Clyde Edgerton

The below really happened. Honest.

Rarely does material for a novel fall flat and full into my lap. It happened a few days ago.

This is raw material and I'll deliver it to you straight — just as it happened — with only names, occupations, et cetera, changed to protect the privacy of my neighbors (even though, if I asked, they'd probably be OK with my using real names).

I was sitting on my living room couch at home, alone, reading student work when my cell phone rang. Here's what I heard: "Clyde, this is Delores Seeley and Mama's fallen on the bedroom floor. Dot Gibbs is on the way but it's going to take her a little while to get there. Could you go over and help her up? The front door is open." I pictured Mrs. Seeley in her bedroom, on the floor. I pictured her daughter at her realtor's desk in Greensboro.

"Sure thing. I'll get right down there." Mrs. Seeley's house is less than a block from my house. I rushed out the door and ran down to Mrs. Seeley's front door. It was locked. I ran around to the side door. It was locked. At the back door, I had my phone out, searching for "recent calls." I touched the number that had just called. I tried the back door. Locked. I was embarrassed that I couldn't remember the daughter's name. She answered.

"The doors are all locked," I said. "Can you tell me where to find a key?"

"Just look under the small flower pot by the toolshed door." (This is not the location she told me but you get the idea.)

I got the key and entered the side door and into the kitchen. An alarm commenced. A loud alarm — a beeping sound with a man's voice saying something like, "MOVEMENT DETECTED IN THE KITCHEN!"

I didn't care about the alarm. I had to get to Mrs. Seeley and see if she was OK. Get her comfortable, call her daughter back and the wait for Dot Gibbs, who was on the way. I called out, "Mrs. Seeley!" No response. I rushed upstairs. I'd been in Mrs. Seeley's house — we enjoyed chatting occasionally — but wasn't sure where she slept. "MOVEMEMENT DETECTED IN HALLWAY!" BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP! I pictured myself getting shot by a policeman. Maybe just in the arm.

I rushed through the upstairs bedrooms, calling out, "Mrs. Seeley, I'm here!" *No Mrs. Seeley.* Oh — her bedroom is *downstairs,* of course. I bounded down the carpeted stairs. "MOVEMENT DETECTED IN THE LIVING ROOM!" BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP.

"Mrs. Seeley, I'm coming!"

There was no bedroom downstairs. My breathing had picked up a bit.

I rushed back upstairs with the alarm system going full blast. I looked behind a couple of beds, in a bathroom. *"Mrs. Seeley!"* I stood with ear cocked. BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP.

She was clearly not in the house. Headed back out the kitchen door, downstairs, I was looking for that recent number again. And what was her first name?

"Hello," came the daughter's voice.

"She's not there. She's not at home."

"What?! That can't be . . . "

As she explained that she'd just talked to her mother five minutes before, I looked across the street at Mrs. CREELEY'S house.

Mrs. CREELEY!! NOT Mrs. SEELEY. Oh my goodness! OH MY GOODNESS. MRS. CREELEY! Also a friend, also elderly, also . . .

"Who is this?" I asked.

"Lois Creeley."

"I'm so, so sorry, Lois. I'm at the wrong house. I'm running to your mama's house right now."

Here is where — I don't know this — Lois may have been thinking: You *imbecile!*

I rushed over, found dear Mrs. Creeley sitting on her bedroom floor. I helped her up just as Dot Gibbs (earlier sent by Lois) walked in.

Mrs. Creeley was smiling and seemed OK and told me that the numbers to disarm Mrs. Seeley's alarm system were on a small piece of paper in a little dish on her microwave. (She verified that she and Mrs. Seeley kept their keys in the same place.)

Next — in short order — I head back to Mrs. Seeley's to shut off the alarm, though I'm surprised I can't hear it from outside; a black SUV screeches to a halt in front of Mrs. Seeley's house; I raise my hands, approach the car. It's not a detective; it's a buddy, Fred. Before I can say a word, he says, "Who's dog is that?"

A big strange dog is standing on the sidewalk.

"I don't know."

A police car drives up.

I raise my hands, start explaining, as the policeman gets out of the car.

It turns out that the dog belongs to Dot Gibbs. (Are you still with me?)

The policeman says, "Can I see some identification?"

This is where Fred could have said, "I sure as hell don't know him." But he didn't.

I pull my driver's license from my billfold. The photo is worn away. I find another picture I.D.

Let's cut to the chase:

1. The alarm had shut down once I left and closed the door.
2. Fred drove away.
3. The policeman left.
4. Dot got her dog back.
5. I walked home thinking about fiction possibilities.

My wife, Kristina, has heard me tell this story several times. She thinks there might be a better way to tell it. Yesterday, over lunch, she listened as I told the story to my adult daughter, Catherine.

Kristina said, "The story might work better if you say at the outset that there are a couple of elderly widows who live nearby in our community."

"I don't think so," I said. "I want the realization of what's happened to come all of a sudden."

Catherine placed her glass of tea on the table and said, "Why not just say there are three elderly people in your community and one can't hear very well?"

Clyde Edgerton is the author of ten novels, a memoir, and a new work, Papadaddy's Book for New Fathers. *He is the Thomas S. Kenan III Distinguished Professor of Creative Writing at UNCW.*

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